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THE WORLD OF ACTION



THE AUTHOR
(Pencil Drawing by James Gunn)

THE WORLD OF ACTION

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

of

VALENTINE WILLIAMS



HAMISH HAMILTON
90 GREAT RUSSELL STREET LONDON

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*Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He, who can call to-day his own:
He who, secure within, can say,
To-morrow do thy worst, for I have liv'd to-day.
Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,
The joys I have possess'd, in spite of fate, are mine.
Not heaven itself upon the past has power;
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.*

JOHN DRYDEN. *Imitations of Horace.*

*J'ai tant joué avec age
A la paume que maintenant
J'ai quarante-cinq: sur bon gage
Nous jouons, non pas pour néant.
Assez me sens fort et puissant
De garder mon jeu jusqu'à ci,
Ne je ne crains rien que souci.*

Allegory on the game of real tennis, composed by Charles d'Orleans, captured at Agincourt and held prisoner of war in England in custody of the Wingfield family, ancestors of Major Wingfield, the originator of lawn tennis.

Wisdom is better than weapons of war.

Motto of the Secret Service as quoted by Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, Director of Naval Intelligence at the British Admiralty during the World War.

TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER
GEORGE DOUGLAS WILLIAMS
CHIEF EDITOR OF REUTER'S
BORN 14TH JAN. 1839
DIED 19TH SEPT. 1910
'Vinctus at non victus'

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CHAPTER I

THE CONTINUITY OF HISTORY

IT is not easy to lay down precisely the age at which a man may with propriety publish his autobiography. If he bring it out while he is still youthful, he is apt to be rated vain and precocious, while to do so, forestalling old age, in his middle years, however full and varied his life may continue to be, is to risk branding himself a back number. It seems to me, however, that to await the evening of life for the gathering up and threshing of the sheaves, is to incur the greater risk. All too soon the lapse of time begins to blur the sharp outlines of remembered things, especially when every day the fresh encounters and impressions of a crowded life threaten to confuse the record. I agree with Patrick Henry when he told the Virginia Convention, 'I know of no way of judging the future but by the past.' To-day and to-morrow are the children of yesterday. When a man has a story to tell, the better time to tell it is before the march of events has robbed the lessons he has learnt in life of any value they may possess. There is such a thing as publishing one's autobiography too late.

I was a newspaper man, then a soldier and now I am a novelist, whose feet still turn to Fleet Street as inevitably as a river to the sea. I have touched life at many angles, the grave and the gay, the villainous as well as the sublime, making notes as I mingled with all sorts and conditions of men, the great as well as the humble, and finding humanity the most interesting study of all. Almost everything I know life has taught me and anything I may have to teach is drawn from life.

A writer never graduates. I am still learning my trade as a novelist, but, as I realise in retrospect, its rudiments I picked up in Fleet Street, in wars and revolutions, in and out of the chanceries and parliaments of Europe. As I can trace back plot and characters in my novels to incidents and encounters of my newspaper days when, with a belt of golden sovereigns round my waist, I would leave at an hour's notice for Spain or the Balkans or Italy, so I discern around me to-day innumerable threads connecting with the political and social life of the world as it was.

The past can take care of itself. It is the new values of the rapidly changing world we live in to-day that are important. A curious thing about them is that the closer we scrutinise them, the better showing they make. I shall not try to establish these values. My hope rather is that, in the course of this narrative, they may establish themselves by contrast with certain highlights I descried in the world as I have known it. To glorify the present with fire from the fountains of the past, as the poet wrote, seems to me to be a task to warrant a busy author indulging in a Sabbatical year.

The continuity of history has always appealed to me. It fascinates me to look back and reflect, for instance, that to Pepys and Evelyn the reign of Henry VIII must have seemed a great deal more vivid even than the picture of their own day, as painted by those famous diarists, comes down to us. My father's father was born as far back as 1797 and I have worked it out that the black-draped block outside the Palace window in Whitehall, that frosty morning of January 1649 which ushered in the revolutionary history of modern Europe, could have been described to him at third hand.¹

One of my earliest recollections is of being taken as a very small child to see my godfather, Valentine French, after whom

¹ Since writing the above I read in the *Daily Mail* of 31st December, 1937, a letter to the Editor from 'M.S.' Southport stating: 'I am the son of a father by a second marriage contracted late in life. I am 89. My father was 86 when I was born. His father was 78 at the time of my father's birth. My grandfather was born in 1684 when his father was 52. My great-grandfather born thus in 1632 saw Charles I beheaded.'

I was named, lying in his coffin. He died in the year 1888 at the age of eighty-three and he could remember as a small boy the stage-coaches and post-chaises coming through the villages decorated with oak leaves in celebration of Waterloo. A similar link with Waterloo was furnished by a veteran member of Boodles I used to hear about, who liked in his old age to tell how, walking out as a child with his father along Pall Mall, they perceived a knot of people gathered cheering outside the old War Office (where the Royal Automobile Club now stands). A dusty chaise drawn by smoking horses stood there and from the windows of the conveyance protruded a sheaf of golden eagles – it was the Duke of Wellington's courier to the Prince Regent with the first tidings of victory.

The continuity of history! It has always diverted me to cast about for traces of it. During the War, when I was billeted at Vauchelles on the Somme with the 1st Guards Brigade, Baron de Gosselin, who had the château there, took me up to his bedroom and showed me, scratched on the window, the name 'Julie' and the date '1812'. The wife of a Russian officer, lodged at the château after Napoleon's withdrawal to Elba – she might not even have been his wife – had written her name there with a diamond. Twice – in 1870 and again in 1914 – the Prussians were also the uninvited guests of the Gosselin family. Likewise when I was at the War, I saw at the Château d'Eperlecques, near Théroutanne, the rings driven into the château walls by the British 15th Light Dragoons when quartered there after Waterloo, to which, when I was at Eperlecques, the troopers of the 15th Hussars, as the 15th Light Dragoons afterwards became, were tethering their horses.

My own life may fairly be considered as a bridge between Stalin and the Chartists, inasmuch as my father could remember being lifted up as a child to see a Chartist procession go by. In 1839, when my father was born, Waterloo was as fresh in men's minds as the outbreak of the World War to-day. He could recall being taken as a schoolboy to visit the Great Exhibition of 1851, that characteristic manifestation of Victorian activities and aspirations at which Her Majesty

sculptured in soap foreshadowed Wembley's offering of her great-grandson moulded in Empire butter. My father always spoke of his escort as 'a gentleman', a phrase which conjured up in my mind something portentously solemn and Victorian – all top-hat and whiskers and peg-top pantaloons – especially as, after dragging his small charge through miles of improving exhibits, his mentor conducted him gravely to a refreshment-room and there by way of lunch presented him with a glass of milk and one bun. That scurvy hospitality remained as one little boy's solitary recollection of the glories of the Great Exhibition – a warning to parents.

My father was George Douglas Williams and his entire career was bound up with Reuter's, the great British news agency, of which he was Chief Editor when he retired. His active life as a journalist embraced the whole upward curve of the world's progress from the welding of a nation in the American Civil War to the crumbling of Russia's dream of Far Eastern expansion. From childhood he was taught the love of literature and foreign languages by his father, a notable linguist. An early diary of my grandfather's, which he kept when leading the life of a country gentleman at Lansdowne, outside Bath, in the thirties shows that one of his recreations was to turn the Gospels into Greek or render the Latin and Greek classics into English verse. He had an excellent command of French, Italian and Spanish and among my books is his *Don Quixote* in the original, a fine copy bound in vellum which he purchased in Madrid during his 'grand tour'.

As a boy it was my father's Sunday task to translate the Lesson into French, or Italian, or Spanish. Backslidings were duly corrected, after the Victorian habit, with a cane – my grandfather had a penchant for early morning executions. He was the strictest of disciplinarians and invariably addressed my grandmother – his second wife – as 'Mrs. Williams' or 'Ma'am'. His English was apt to be biblical in its bluntness. My father used to tell how once, when he found fault with the food at table, my grandfather turned to his spouse and said, Olympically, 'Your son is picksome, ma'am! Let him rather give thanks to his Maker that he has a sufficiency of

coarse and abundant victuals to fill his belly!' He liked to deck out his table talk with classical tags in the original and after such a quotation had rolled sonorously from his tongue, he would usually add, addressing my grandmother, 'Which your son, ma'am, will have the obligingness to translate!'

His portrait, which I have, shows him in a red velvet waistcoat and gold chain, with a splendid head of wavy, jet-black hair, black whiskers and a firm, clean-shaven mouth. For many years the family lived in Camberwell Grove, a highly 'eligible' suburban retreat in those days – Joseph Chamberlain was born in Camberwell Grove. I have dwelt at some length upon my grandfather because, apart from the influence he exercised vicariously upon my bringing up, he represented a type of British paterfamilias at present as extinct as the smoking cap and the poke bonnet. He had his Law degree and, although he never practised as far as I know, retained almost to the day of his death his chambers in the Temple at No. 4 King's Bench Walk, where he liked to give oyster and porter parties for his friends after the play. At one time he lived at Ilchester, in Somerset, where he was locally known as 'Squire Williams' and I have the sabre he wore, as an officer of the North Somerset Yeomanry in the Corn Riots of the early thirties. In recognition of his services his tenants presented him with a Toby jug suitably inscribed, which is still in the family. One way and the other he must have been comfortably off, for he never earned his own living; but the money seems to have slipped through his fingers and he did not leave much beyond a house full of nice furniture, old china and silver when death overtook him. He died, like an English gentleman of the old school, of the gout at the age of eighty-one, four years before I was born.

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It was from this background of Victorian discipline, stern principles and an unusually high level of culture that, in the year 1859, at the age of twenty, my father emerged into metropolitan journalism. As good a linguist as his father – he spoke and wrote French, Italian and Spanish fluently – well-read and fortified by an admirable literary judgment, thereafter, for

more than forty years, he was immersed in the chronicling of the world's affairs.

He was essentially and entirely of the nineteenth century, that spacious age stretching from the closing convulsions of the French Revolution to the invention of the petrol-driven carriage – the present century, at the time of his death in 1910, was yet too young for him to have grasped its trend. Looking back upon that sturdy character which so greatly influenced me, I feel as though the last hand-clasp we exchanged, my father and I, linked up that Europe which was doomed to disappear in the fire and smoke of the Hindenburg Line with the new civilisation at present struggling to emerge from the chaos of economic disaster.

It is scarcely realised now what a thrill ran through the nation when, after Queen Victoria's long innings, a King ruled in England once more. My father voiced the general sentiment in a remark so Victorian in its implications as to be unthinkable in the mouth of an Englishman to-day. When one of my sisters asked him why he was so pleased to have a King again, he replied apologetically, 'I can't help thinking that man is a nobler animal than woman!'

He was a few years older than King Edward, and I was surprised to find with what a real shock the King's death came to him. I suppose that, to his contemporaries, the Prince of Wales was identified, even more than Queen Victoria, with the daily life of his time. My father died four months later, and I had the impression that the Royal passing-bell sounded like a *Nunc Dimittis* in his ears and the ears of many others of his generation.

Centuries of struggle, of happiness and suffering, of persecution and of emancipation, peer out of the dimness of the ages through the eyes of human beings. For more than forty years my father was recording world events and for almost three decades more I carried the torch which he handed on to me, and my brother after me. Millions of printed words, miles of columns of news print, represent the sum of the years of unbroken newspaper activity from 1859 on to the present day, standing to my father's record and ours, from the

steamer-borne dispatches of the American Civil War to the air-mails, the transatlantic telephone and the radio transmission of pictures to-day.

My father and the forces that moulded him have a definite place in the picture I am trying to paint, if only for the reason that the continuity of history is so clearly marked in our respective careers. He was coached in literature and languages by his father and in turn coached me: he was a special correspondent abroad in friendly rivalry with such famous newspaper men as the great de Blowitz, 'Billy' Russell, Archibald Forbes, and Laurence Oliphant, even as I was destined to be, in competition with Ashmead-Bartlett, Philip Gibbs, Henry Nevinson, Martin Donahoe, Percival Phillips, Frederic Palmer, Richard Harding Davis and Alexander Powell: like me he saw great European nations at war and wrote his dispatches under fire; and he met and spoke with Cavour, Bismarck, Thiers and Gambetta just as I, four decades later, was to meet and speak with von Bülow, Clemenceau, Delcassé, Briand, Theodore Roosevelt. He saw the French Empire crash, I the German: he was fascinated by the strange, haunted regard of Napoleon III, 'that great unrecognised incapacity', as Bismarck called him, even as I by the restless, unstable personality of William the Second; and it was only chance, as I recollect, that prevented him from attending the proclamation of the German Empire in that selfsame hall at Versailles where, forty-eight years later, I was to see the German eagle humbled to the dust.

As I have spoken of the continuity of history I will here digress to tell an anecdote. When I was head of the *Daily Mail* staff at the Paris Peace Conference, although I was unable to procure my wife an official invitation to see peace signed, I contrived, by means of a little judicious bribery, to smuggle her into the *Galérie des Glaces*. She was standing on a bench, looking out over the heads of the crowd, when a nice old gentleman, who was perched on a chair beside her, remarked in English, 'I suppose I'm the only person present who saw the German Empire proclaimed in this very hall on the 18th of January, 1871.'

It was the late Lord Dunraven (the American Yacht Cup challenger). He served as a special correspondent – of the *Daily Chronicle*, I believe – during the Prussian occupation of Versailles. From inquiries I made at the time I have little doubt that his surmise was correct. Some thought that Clemenceau must have been present on that historic occasion, but I ascertained that at the time he was Mayor of Montmartre and far too occupied with the confused state of national politics to get away to Versailles, even if he had wished to witness the crowning of Germany's victory.

The Europe of my father's manhood years was dominated, notwithstanding Sedan, by France: Russia was the boggy-man, barbarous and unintelligible, whose censors had the execrable taste to black out the leading articles in Mr. Delane's *Times*. Germany was an inconvenient upstart with whom it behoved Britain to walk delicately owing to tender recollections of the beloved Albert: Italy still a chaotic experiment: Turkey a sick man with Constantinople as the bone of contention among the impatiently waiting heirs; and the United States a rather vulgar relation.

To the day of his death my father's political outlook was coloured by his warm affection for France. Not only was he, by virtue of his upbringing, strongly drawn by the wit and elegance of French literature but also, like most men of his class and age, he was under the spell of Paris. For the Paris of the Second Empire, as he first knew it, was the centre of the civilised world and long after its lights were dimmed and the Tuileries laid in ashes, the prestige of its splendour lingered on. Moreover, my father's first foreign post was Florence, and the behaviour of the Austrians in Italy was not such as to predispose him in favour of the Teuton. He was never blind to the insensate folly of Napoleon and his Ministers and right up to Fashoda his besetting fear was lest French Chauvinism should again set Europe ablaze. But at the same time he clearly perceived the danger to England of Germany's rise to world power. The frightful humiliation of France, of which he had been an eye-witness, was a lesson he never forgot; and even before Lord Roberts uttered his first warnings of the

German peril, my father kept his gaze constantly fixed on the other side of the Rhine. I was a schoolboy at the time but I remember him, as clearly as though it were yesterday, putting into my hands Rudyard Kipling's 'Recessional', published in *The Times* on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of 1897, and begging me earnestly to read it.

On September 9, 1870, a few days after the proclamation of the French Republic, my father wrote from Paris to his mother:

'Some days ago, I sent Father two papers containing a full description of the revolution which was accomplished here on the 4th of the month – Sunday. I was in the thick of it all, and if there had been any fighting might have come in for a bullet. But, although there was immense, frantic enthusiasm, all passed off without any violence or bloodshed. There was not a single head broken. I went early to the Chamber of Deputies that day – for important proceedings were expected after the terrible news of the defeat before Sedan and the Emperor's capture. And there was indeed an outburst. Early in the afternoon, immense multitudes rushed over the Pont de la Concorde and invaded the Chamber. The troops and National Guard fraternised with them and then arose formidable, sky-rending shouts which made one thrill and feel enthusiastic too. It was "Down with the Emperor!" and "Vive la République!" What a delirium it was! Men were kissing each other and laughing and weeping for joy. They were relieved, they said, of the nightmare of twenty years (the Empire): they could laugh again and be free. The scene in the Chamber reminded me of the descriptions of the National Convention in the days of the First Republic. The mob swarmed all over the place, on the floor of the house, in the deputies' seats, everywhere, and the confusion and the uproar were such as to defy description. Outside some twenty or thirty thousand people were singing the Marseillaise in chorus – and to hear that so sung is grand indeed. Thus the Empire fell in a day – fell from the weight of its faults and its awful ineptitude in the hour of danger. There is scarcely an example in history of so shameful a collapse as this of France before

Prussia. The fatuity with which the Emperor rushed into war and the incapacity of the carpet knights and courtiers whom he made Marshals and Generals, are pitiable. It is only Dante who would know in what zone of the Inferno to put such a man. He has been well called here the *sinistre histrion* and the French are now paying heavily for their weakness and folly in accepting a master in Napoleon III.'

And a day later:

' . . . What an eventful year this will be for the world! France cast from the first rank of Powers to the second, Germany risen up strong and mighty, the Pope overthrown; and who knows what else there may not be yet to come? England is behaving ignobly, pitiably, in all this, and I almost blush to be an Englishman at the present moment. We have no statesman and no policy and we refuse to raise our voices against the dismemberment of a faithful ally. England never abdicated so shamefully her place as a great Power and never gave such reason as now to those who accuse her of utter selfishness. We shall suffer for it bitterly one day and in *our* distress shall look around in vain for a single friend to help us. We think we are secure in our island and so let carnage and violence go on unchecked and allow ourselves to become the by-word of Europe as the power that will talk but never fight to prevent wrong. In my humble opinion Mr. Gladstone, great man as he is, is quite at sea in foreign affairs, and the rest of the Cabinet are narrow-minded respectabilities and peace-at-any-price men.'

The continuity of history! Did not Englishmen hear in the Great War of another Power that 'will talk but never fight to prevent wrong'?

CHAPTER II

PORTRAIT OF A PIONEER

IN the year after Waterloo, in the picturesque German Residenz of Hesse-Cassel, there was born to poor Jewish parents a boy who was destined to become one of the outstanding pioneers of modern journalism. I have been told that the first Baron de Reuter's real name was Josaphat and that in his youth, before railways came into existence, he travelled the roads in Germany as a pedlar, with a pack on his back. What is certain is that in the very earliest days of telegraphic communication, with the foresightedness which ever distinguished this remarkable man, he perceived that a new era in journalism was at hand.

Up to the middle of the nineteenth century few newspapers had foreign correspondents of their own. Foreign intelligence was culled from foreign newspapers as and when they arrived through the mails or from letters forwarded by banking correspondents abroad. The first telegraph line in Germany to be open to the public was that between Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) and Berlin and in 1849 Paul Julius Reuter, as he then was, was established at Aachen where he had set up an organisation for collecting and transmitting telegraphic news. The enterprise and importance of the London Press and, especially, the development of telegraphic facilities in the British Isles soon drew his attention to England. He became a naturalised British subject and, when the first cable between Dover and Calais was laid in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, transferred his activities to London. There, on October 10th of that year, he opened at the Royal Exchange his first place of business in England, simply known as Reuter's Office. Such was the beginning of the great news agency which to-day covers the entire

globe with its tentacles and the inauguration of the present world-wide practice of news syndication.

At that early period the work, which Mr. Reuter undertook himself with the aid of an office boy, was confined to the circulation of market reports and commercial news. Gradually, however, the business extended and 'Reuter's Office', having representatives in most of the foreign capitals, began to supply political and general news as well. At this stage of his career Reuter reverted to his old occupation of peddling, though now not ribbons and laces, but foreign news messages were his wares. Fired with faith in his idea and fortified with that patience which is the tribal badge, he spent long hours in the waiting-rooms of Fleet Street attending the pleasure of Olympic and distrustful editors. Many newspapers, in the first rank *The Times*, long refused to publish his news at all and those who found room for his dispatches did so infrequently and capriciously. In his old age Baron de Reuter, always an excellent raconteur, delighted to tell of the ups and downs of those early London days.

It was not until the year 1859 that 'Reuter's Office' established itself definitely as a prompt and reliable news-purveyor by the first of a long series of historic 'scoops'. By the astute use of the Paris-London telegraph—at that time Paris was still the only point on the Continent in direct telegraphic communication with London—Reuter circulated the first report of the ominous words used by the Emperor Napoleon III to the Austrian Minister to France at the New Year's Day reception at the Tuileries, which foreshadowed the Italian campaign and the long fight for the union of Italy. The Emperor's remarks, which were tantamount to a declaration of war, set Europe by the ears and convulsed the Stock Exchange, and Reuter's reputation was made. Thereafter, no London newspaper could afford to dispense with the Reuter news and even Mr. Walter's *Times* capitulated and made an agreement with Mr. Reuter for a daily news service.

It was about this time that my father, then drudging as an underpaid clerk in a shipping office in Leadenhall Street, chanced to read a newspaper advertisement offering employ-

ment of a literary character to a well-educated young man with a knowledge of languages. Inquiry showed that Reuter's Telegraph Office, by now removed to more commodious premises at 5 Lothbury, in the shadow of the Bank of England, was the advertiser. My grandfather accompanied his son to the latter's first momentous interview with his future employer and I have no doubt condescended mightily to the diminutive little German with the trailing 'weepers' and funny English who received them. In the upshot the applicant was engaged as sub-editor at a weekly wage, I think of a pound. It is characteristic of the cheapness of life in London in the Victorian era – for Reuter's compensated its staff adequately if not overgenerously – that when my father retired as Chief Editor in 1902, the year after Queen Victoria's death, after forty-two years of unremitting and highly responsible labour, his salary was £750 a year, free of income tax – less than fifteen times his original weekly stipend. As a matter of interest I might add that, until shortly after the Great War, all Reuter salaries were paid free of income tax. O tempora, O mores!

Under the system which Mr. Reuter had initiated for the exchange of news with foreign capitals – a system which ultimately developed into a comprehensive plan of alliances with the official news agencies abroad, the Havas of Paris, the Wolff Bureau of Berlin, the Stefani of Rome, the Associated Press of New York, etc. – the bulk of the messages handled had to be translated – into English for the incoming, out of English for the outgoing. Foreign tongues are, notoriously, not the average Englishman's forte and Mr. Reuter, therefore, had perforce to rely to a considerable extent on foreign journalists, some of them already associated with him on the Continent, in forming his small staff.

A singularly motley crew he had gathered about him. The bohemianism of Grub Street and the Burschenfreiheit of Berlin and Vienna mingled together in the editorial rooms at Lothbury and the small night office, located handy to the telegraph companies, at 5 King Street, Finsbury Square. The most prominent and gifted of Mr. Reuter's helpers in those days was Dr. Engländer, an Austrian Jew who, condemned to death for

his share in the March Revolution of '48 in Vienna, had taken refuge in Paris. He seems to have been a fine journalist, and a notable polyglot, but of my father's many stories about him I am afraid I only remember the Herr Doktor's invariable habit of travelling in company with one of his 'nieces', of whom, it appears, he had an inexhaustible and attractive assortment.

As a very small boy – I cannot have been more than seven or eight years old at the time – I had an encounter with one of the 'Old Guard' at Reuter's, which I have never forgotten. It was a foggy November day, and, escorted, by the Chief 'Manifold', as the clerks were called who made the copies of the messages for newspapers – by hand, of course, at that time – I had been to see the Lord Mayor's Show. When I was duly landed back in the editorial room at Reuter's, my father was busy and I was left to my own devices. At this moment an enormous man, bony and lanky and crowned with a mane of iron-grey hair, approached me.

'Young man,' he thundered at me in stentorian tones, with a strong German accent, 'do you perhaps know who I am?' 'No, sir,' I answered timidly. He pounded his barrel chest with his fist. 'I am Petri, Leutnant der Reserve, Seventh Corps, B.G.,' he boomed, and added, 'and can you perhaps tell me what "B.G." stands for?' I shook my head. 'Bloody Cherman!' roared Lieutenant Petri, who had fought with the Prussians against the French at Metz, and shouted with laughter.

Thereafter, he bought me a bun and a glass of lemonade and subsequently invited me to visit with him a large toy warehouse in the City kept by a 'Cherman' friend of his. I was turned loose in this entrancing place, as it seemed to my juvenile eyes, and allowed to choose three toys for myself. The selection was not easy but I can still remember that I came away with a musical box, a toy stable and a gun. What a thrilling afternoon that was!

As news knows no clock, so Reuter's maintained a twenty-four-hour service, as, indeed, the agency does to this day. The night desk at that time was a solo turn and it fell to my father's lot, as the latest joined recruit, to fill it for months at a time. 'You have no idea how hard we used to work,' he used to tell me

— a seven-day week and a twelve- or fourteen-hour day was the rule. He was still living with the family and, as there were no all night trams and no early morning tubes or buses, he had to tramp home through the dawn all the way from Finsbury Square to Camberwell. His route lay over London Bridge and I never cross that historic structure without a thought of that dark-haired young man, his brain buzzing with thoughts of Napoleon and Monsieur Thiers, Cavour and Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel, Herr von Bismarck and the Chancellor Beust, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, pausing at the parapet, as he told me he would often do, to doff his hat and let the early morning breezes from the Pool fan his brow.

In those days Mr. Reuter, married to a young lady from Berlin and father of three children, lived in Finsbury Square. The night office of the agency—at 5 King Street, as I have said—was situated at the bottom of the garden, with a private way through from the house, a patriarchal arrangement which fills me, who have known the stern utilitarianism of modern Fleet Street, with a gentle melancholy. It was Mr. Reuter's habit to pop in at the night office at odd hours, to hear what news had come in but also, no doubt, to assure himself that the editor-in-charge was at the post of duty. On one fatal occasion, in the early stages of the American Civil War, my father, who was on the night-shift, had flung himself down on the camp-bed which the management had thoughtfully provided for the use of the editor-in-charge between messages. He awoke from a deep slumber to see before him Mr. Reuter, in night-cap and Paisley dressing-gown over a long white night-shirt, shaking a dispatch at him. It was a message which the telegraph boy, failing to arouse the sleeper, had deposited upon his chest.

It was also the first intelligence of the Confederate victory at Bull Run!

'Ah, Mr. Williams,' said Reuter in his gentle way, 'the sleep of youth is so sweet, I cannot be angry with you!'

With their private aeroplanes and transatlantic telephone-calls and wireless pictures, modern editors are apt to be self-

complacent about their enterprise. But such pioneers of journalism as Paul Julius Reuter, John Thaddeus Delane and Gordon Bennett could still give them points. The outbreak of the American Civil War – the War between the States, they prefer to say below the Mason-Dixon Line – found the whole English-speaking world clamorous for news of events which were taking place across 3,000 miles of ocean. There was no cable – all news had to come, slowly and methodically, by mail. Crack Cunarders, like the *Arabia* and the *Canada*, took eleven days to cross the Atlantic: the U.S. mail packet *Fullton* four or five days longer.

Mr. Reuter never sat down under difficulties. Oriental blood in his veins there might be, but no 'Imshallah' for him: his motto, like Foch's, was 'Attack!' He could not bridge the ocean, but he could shorten the period news took to cross it.

His plan was to intercept the American mail steamer off the extreme tip of the S.W. coast of Ireland. The latest dispatches from the seat of war, enclosed in tin canisters, were put on board the mail-packet at the last possible moment at New York, and thrown overboard to swift vessels waiting off Crookhaven. If the packet passed at night, canisters burning a blue light were used, in case they fell in the sea, and exciting tales are related of the experiences of the Reuter cutters putting off in the teeth of a gale on their perilous mission. To expedite transmission of the dispatches to London Mr. Reuter had a special telegraph line constructed, over many miles of a wild, rough country which would otherwise have to be traversed by jaunting-car, from Crookhaven to Cork, where the dispatches were put on the wire to London. A similar arrangement was maintained at Southampton where *The Times* also met the American mail by boat and many exciting races for the telegraph office are said to have taken place between Mr. Reuter's boatmen and Mr. Delane's.

Mr. Reuter's enterprise was rewarded by a number of sensational 'exclusives'. The agency was first with the tidings of the release of the Confederate Commissioners, Messrs. Slidell and Mason, who had been seized on board the British steamer *Trent* by the Federal authorities and was able to give Lord

Palmerston early intelligence of the adjustment of an incident which had brought Britain and the Federal Government to the verge of war. When Lincoln was shot by Booth at the Ford Theatre in Washington, Reuter's New York correspondent, by chartering a special boat, managed to overtake the mail-packet and fling a canister containing a full report of the tragedy on board. Thanks to his enterprise, the agency was a full week ahead with the news.

The conclusion of peace in the United States found Reuter's an established institution, and Reuter's telegrams daily occupied the place of honour in the columns devoted to telegraphic news in the English Press. The system was made as far-reaching as was practicable with the limited extent of communication then existing. Agents were appointed in all the important British colonies and the arrangements for the exchange of news with the other European news agencies improved and extended. In 1865 Mr. Reuter, wishing to provide more capital for the extension of his services and feeling, moreover, that the anxiety and responsibility of so vast an organisation were too great to be borne permanently by one individual, converted his undertaking into a limited company, of which he remained the Managing-Director. One of the first tasks upon which the new company embarked was the laying of a cable between Lowestoft and the Island of Norderney, off the Frisian coast of Germany, in the North Sea, which was destined to become the first section of the overland route to India. Four years later, when the Post Office acquired all the telegraphic lines then existing in the British Isles, the Government purchased the cable from the Company. Sir William Vernon Harcourt, M.P., represented Reuter's in the protracted negotiations that took place and the sum obtained for expropriation was so much in advance of what had been expected that a handsome bonus was distributed to the staff.

In 1871 the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha bestowed a Barony upon Mr. Reuter but it was not until twenty years later that, at the instance of Lord Salisbury, he was admitted to the recognised Foreign Nobility of England and allowed, together with his two sons, according to the German practice, to use the title

in England. He retired from the Managing-Directorship of the Company in 1878 in favour of his elder son, Baron Herbert de Reuter, and died at Nice, a hale old gentleman full of years and stories, in 1898.

Baron de Reuter must have been a remarkable personality. Farsighted, tenacious, adjustable, the prevision he displayed in being the first to grasp the possibilities of telegraphic communication for the systematic and rapid distribution of news was also seen in the stubborn attempts he made to open Persia to British influence. In this connection a brief sketch of his career, issued by Reuter's at the time of its move to the Victoria Embankment in 1923, says: 'The magnitude of his conceptions is shown by his repeated attempts to carry out the concession granted to him personally by the Persian Government in 1872 for the construction of a railway from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf with the sole object of serving the common interest of Persia and the country of his adoption. He was so ill-supported by the British Government, however, that Russian influence succeeded in stopping the work after a survey had been made and the first portion of the track prepared.

Nothing daunted, Reuter successively obtained concessions to construct railway lines (1) from Muhammerah to Ispahan; (2) from Schuster to Teheran; and (3) from Muhammerah to Teheran, but only received lukewarm support from the Imperial Government and was not able to proceed although the capital would have been readily obtainable. Persia remained closed to the commerce of the world and the line that would have tapped the more recently discovered oil-well district was never built. As a result of their unenlightened policy, the Imperial authorities, many years later, had to ask Parliament for a vote of two million pounds to ensure the output of Persian oil for the war-ships and vessels of trade. Had the railways been in existence when War broke out in 1914 the position of Britain in that part of the world would have been so strengthened that the whole progress of the Mesopotamian campaign might have been changed, if indeed it had been rendered necessary at all. Part of the Baron's



BARON DE REUTER
(*Vanity Fair*)

scheme was to effect a junction at Kermanshah with a line that could have been constructed by the Tigris Valley to Bagdad, thus greatly increasing British influence in the Near East.'

Baron de Reuter's original Persian concession was an immense monopoly, giving him the exclusive privilege of constructing railways, working mines and forests, and making use of all other natural resources of the country, besides farming the Customs. It was annulled in 1889, the Baron receiving the concession of the Imperial Bank of Persia in its place.

A small, dapper man, natty in his attire, with long 'favoris' framing the otherwise clean-shaven face, as you may see him depicted in Pellegrini's 'Vanity Fair' cartoon, Baron de Reuter was a well-known and popular figure in Victorian society. He enjoyed the friendship of the Prince of Wales, Sir Arthur Sullivan and many other notables of his era and his large house in Palace Gardens was the scene of frequent and lavish parties. Although thoroughly British in sentiment, he was to the last, in appearance and manner, the Paris *boulevardier* type, polished, witty and elegant. He spoke English with a strong German accent and always preferred to speak and write to my father in French.

If genius be the infinite capacity for taking pains, it also comprises the iron resolution not to be diverted from the appointed path. The genius of Paul Julius Reuter did not alone consist of being the first to perceive the possibilities of the syndication of telegraphic news; his greatness lay in his rigid determination that the name of Reuter should always stand for accuracy and reliability. By dint of his unfailing enterprise and natural astuteness he might have made money in those early days by paying more attention to speed and sensationalism and less to accuracy, for, throughout the history of journalism, there have been newspapers to which, as my father used to say, 'A tasty lie is more palatable than a tardy truth.'

But Paul Julius forestalled the modern slogan 'Truth in advertising' by recognising that to create a lasting market,

his wares must not be counterfeit: it was he, and he alone who, by personal example and preaching in and out of season, founded the Reuter tradition which is a nobler monument to his memory than that which Fleet Street has forgotten to erect. In the whole annals of journalism nothing, in my opinion, is more strange than that an obscure Jewish pedlar, wandering the highways and byways, should have reared a structure based on foundations as solid as this. On several occasions the world has paid tribute to the Reuter name by accepting, on the faith of Reuter, news of sensational importance as yet unconfirmed from official sources. The Isandhlwana disaster, in the Zulu War, and the death of the Prince Imperial, and the Relief of Mafeking, perpetuated in Mr. Coward's play *Cavalcade*, were instances of this.

About Isandhlwana (1879) I found this note in my father's papers:

'The news reached Reuter late in the evening from Madeira—ordinarily it should have come by cable from St. Vincent. The telegram began in code, then in the middle contained a lot of English names. Zulu war news was then regarded with more or less languid interest in England. Five sheets had been received up to shortly before 1 a.m. In those days there were no tape machines to the newspaper offices and the messages were taken round by messenger. On this occasion, however, hansom cabs, then the quickest and most dashing form of London transport, were chartered, and the dispatch got into the newspaper offices before 1.30 a.m. *The Times* had a leader.'

It might be a quarter of a century ago that *The Times*, quoting, as is still its daily usage, from its files of a hundred years back, reproduced an advertisement: '24 Old Jewry, a comfortable and desirable dwelling-house with garden.' To this solid City mansion, destined to be its home for more than half a century, Reuter's transferred itself in the spring of 1871, what time my parent was dodging bullets in the Paris Commune. The old house, from which Reuter's moved in 1923,

is still standing, four-storied, narrow-fronted, with reflectors at the windows to lighten the gloom of one of the narrowest and most historic of London streets, but otherwise retaining very much the outward aspect of its original character as some erstwhile City worthy's home. I speak of it here because it is identified, more than any other place in London, with the history of the journalistic family to which I belong.

For we were a Reuter family. For a round three decades – from his return from Paris in '74 until his retirement in 1902 – my father's desk stood in one of the two windows on the second floor of 24 Old Jewry, where the Editorial Room was situated. It was at 24 Old Jewry that my uncle, the late Harry Williams, in his day one of the best-known men in India and for many years Reuter's General Manager at Bombay, joined up, and my uncle, Arthur, who was in the Secretarial Department and was afterwards killed by a fall from his horse in the Market Square at Coolgardie, Western Australia. In that same Editorial Room, gloomy of aspect, low of ceiling with its old-fashioned mantel and open grate, at the age of eighteen I started 'subbing' telegrams and after me my brother Douglas later Reuter's General Manager in the United States, and Chief Editor, even as our father had been; and two of our sisters after us, in the War – it required a world conflagration to open Reuter's Editorial Department to women!

When Reuter's removed to Blackfriars, the greater part of 'No. 24', as we used to call it at home in my father's day, remained empty. Finding ourselves in Old Jewry one afternoon my brother and I decided to visit the old house. It was towards the close of a winter day and the steep and shabby stairs were thick with shadows, those stairs which so many generations of Reuter men have climbed.

Names and faces kept flashing into my mind as we mounted – Frank Roberts, friend of my father's boyhood, who died of cholera in Wolseley's Egyptian campaign: Pigott, who made a famous ride across the desert with the news on the same expedition: Guy Beringer, most charming of Bohemians, correspondent at St. Petersburg, who died from his treatment at the hands of the Bolsheviks: the brilliant but erratic Ellis

Ashmead-Bartlett: George Adam, witty and cynical companion of my youth, who became *Times* correspondent in Paris. When we looked in at last on the Editorial Room and saw it bare and desolate and heard the mice squeak, I caught Douglas by the arm.

‘Let’s go!’ I said. ‘The place is full of ghosts!’

CHAPTER III

VICTORIA REGINA

I WAS born, in London, in the year 1883 and so grew up in a phase of civilisation which has almost completely passed away. My childhood was spent in a London in which horse omnibuses and cabs and the old steam Underground were the sole means of communication. The Underground was the first railway of its kind in the world. With its grimy, gas-lit stations and even grimmer, black tunnels, encrusted with soot and perpetually swirling with clouds of sulphurous smoke belched by the locomotives, it was a regular pit of Tophet. Doctors said that the sulphur was good for the lungs, and there were stories of people with pulmonary complaints travelling regularly by Underground for the sake of their chests. The Underground in a fog, especially at one of the riverside stations like Mark Lane (the station for the Tower of London), was a nocturne in madder, with the station lamps glowing redly through the fog that seeped in everywhere, and the fog blending with the sulphurous fumes to make a mixture that caught the luckless passenger by the throat and half asphyxiated him. Once at Baker Street, on a quiet Sunday evening, I saw a horde of rats, the big, brown rats of the London sewers, playing about the rails. No one has any reason to deplore the passing of the old Underground: nevertheless the complete transformation of the system through electrification deprived London of one of its most characteristic and curious institutions.

In the absence of swifter and more convenient forms of transport and of motion pictures and greyhound racing, people living in the suburbs like our family had to content themselves with the more static amenities of the fireside. It was the age

of evening parties, at which guests changed their shoes in the hall and those with musical pretensions brought their music and, suitably coaxed, performed; of dinner parties, of dances – always in the home. I have the clearest recollection of being excessively bored at many of these functions – in the present era of restaurant entertaining and night clubs young people, I fancy, have a much better time than we ever did.

Cycling, the humble precursor of motoring as a cheap and handy method of getting out into the country, revolutionised by the bearded Mr. Dunlop's invention of the air chamber tyre, did not enter upon its popular vogue, as a recreation for the masses, until after I went to school. There were many sons of well-to-do parents at Downside, the famous Roman Catholic school near Bath, when I was sent there in 1895 but in the school at that time bicycles were still the exception, the prizes of the envied few. I recall, however, that most of us took in a 2d. weekly called *Cycling*, which, personally, I would devour from cover to cover – I understood why when, years later, I heard that a young journalist called Alfred Harmsworth used to write the bulk of it.

My mother, who spent the first few years of her married life in Paris with my father, told me that when she first came to London to live in 1874 Welsh women in red cloaks and tall black hats still used to bring round the milk in pails slung from a wooden yoke across their shoulders. At that period few houses had water laid on above the ground floor or basement and the wages of a maid were £12 a year. In my childhood we had three servants at home, our beloved old nurse, Diddie, a cook and a housemaid. I am under the impression that Diddie's wages never exceeded £20 a year, and I remember two sisters from Norfolk, applying for jobs as housemaid and cook, who asked as wages £16 and £18 a year respectively. These, of course, were suburban prices. The year would have been about 1892.

My earliest recollection goes back to the Queen's Jubilee in 1887. I can dimly remember festoons of flags across the streets and more clearly, the front garden of our house hung with fairy lamps and Chinese lanterns at night. There was also

talk of a coin called a 'Jubilee sixpence'. Diddie had one mounted as a brooch – rogues used to gild them and pass them off as half-sovereigns.

We lived at Notting Hill which, when my parents settled down there from Paris in the seventies, was a newly-developed suburb, where Watts, the painter, on his marriage to his young wife, who was to become known to fame as Ellen Terry, resided at that time.

As Chief Editor of Reuter's my father was liable to be sent for in a hurry when big news came in. There were, of course, no telephones in general use – the first I ever saw was a private line connecting a coal office with the Paddington goods yards, in the early nineties: even during King Edward's reign telephones in suburban houses were still the exception. So my father would be wired for – on Sundays or at night when he was away from the office – or, as often as not, a Reuter messenger would come out by Underground, all the way to Notting Hill, or, in a special emergency, by hansom.

The 'Rooter' messengers, as they were known in Fleet Street, wore a becoming uniform of grey with green facings which owed its inception, I have heard, to an adroit deal of old Baron de Reuter's in buying up the surplus stock of a British manufacturer of cloth for the Confederacy after the collapse of the South in the Civil War. Their caps with the long, old-fashioned peaks, too, resembled the képi of that campaign. Years later, when I visited the great Confederate Museum at Richmond, Virginia, that shrine of broken hearts and dried tears, the sight of the cases filled with Confederate uniforms struck a familiar chord in my mind and I found myself thinking of the old Reuter messengers.

It would take my father something over an hour, from door to door, to get to the office, by Underground to Moorgate Street, which was his usual mode of travelling – about an hour and a half if he went by bus. I wonder whether anybody to-day ever reflects upon the tremendous amount of organisation which the wide network of services run by the different London horse-bus companies of those days involved. Horses had to be changed, for which purpose, at stated points, fresh horses with

their ostlers were stationed and this meant that stables had to be provided all over the suburbs. Then, in the summer, the horses required to be watered en route and at steep hills, as at Church Street, Kensington, spare horses had to be kept in readiness, day and night, to help pull the laden buses up the incline.

The London bus horses which, at the period of which I speak, mostly ran in pairs, were a good-looking lot, splendidly groomed and cared for. I believe they were specially bred to produce a type of horse broad in the chest and long in the leg, so as to pull well. A certain number were earmarked for service with the Royal Artillery in the event of mobilisation and at the time of the South African War a story was current that, to start up teams with the guns, the gunners would slap the gun-carriage and cry 'Right be'ind!' after the manner of the London bus-conductors.

I can remember straw in the bottom of the buses in winter and the dim oil-lamps that lit their interiors at night, and the 'knifeboard' tops that survived on the famous three-horse Madeleine-Bastille buses in Paris long after their disappearance in London. There were seats beside the driver, two on either side of the little throne on which he perched, with his shiny top-hat and rug folded about his knees. The late Lord Rothschild made a practice of sending every bus-driver in London a brace of pheasants from his place at Tring at Christmas, in return for which on Derby Day each year ribbons in the Rothschild racing colours fluttered from every whip. It was customary when you rode beside the driver to give him a penny tip – I suppose in token of appreciation of his careful driving.

I recall the first appearance of the so-called 'garden seats' on the tops of buses – seats ranged one behind the other as at present. No women ever thought of riding on the knifeboard, but the introduction of garden seats changed all that. There used to be a queer, three-horsed bus – an Atlas, I think it was called – with a large glazed parasol permanently stretched above the driver – its route lay along the Tottenham Court Road. And I have a hazy remembrance of an exciting light-

green bus – exciting because it took one to the Zoo from Oxford Circus. It was a one-horse affair and had no outside seats and no conductor – you put your penny in a box inside. There was also a halfpenny bus that went across Waterloo Bridge.

When I first joined Reuter's in the year 1902 I used to cycle to and from the office through the heart of the traffic. Looking back it seems to me that at busy centres like Oxford Circus and the Bank there was as much congestion as there is to-day. And I would not swear that at present the current of traffic moves a great deal faster – the horse buses used to average ten miles an hour over their routes while the speed of a hansom with a good horse was about fifteen. A characteristic feature of City traffic used to be the small, red-jacketed scavenger boys who, with brush and pan, darted in and out of the horses' hoofs, scraping up the horse droppings.

Then as now the streets were noisy. The volume of sound remains substantially what it was, only the note has changed. In those days huge drays rumbled and unsprung carts crashed over the macadam, asphalt or wood paving; drivers cracked their whips and shouted at the horses; bus drivers and conductors called their destinations at every stop – 'Benk! Benk! 'Ere you are, lady! A penny all the way!'; hansom cabs jingled bells like sleighs. If I had to select one characteristic sound to typify London at the end of the nineteenth century it would be the silvery jingle of bells mingled with the fast clop-clop of hoofs – the music of the hansom cab.

It is not my purpose to review the whole of the cataclysmic changes which the War brought in its train, not only in England, but everywhere. I am rather concerned with picking out, here and there, certain high lights as, glancing back over a period of half a century, I descry them. Of these one of the most clearly visible is the standardisation of women's types.

It was Alfred Harmsworth, I believe, who was the first to realise – at any rate in this country – that women are the most important consumers and therefore, the most diligent readers of advertisements. His *Daily Mail*, founded in 1896 – 'it's Park Lane or the poor-house, boys!' he cried gleefully, as the last formes were locked away on that momentous evening of

May 29th which was to bring him fortune and a peerage and revolutionise the British Press – was the first newspaper to cater definitely for the woman reader. To-day all over the world advertisers are angling for the housewife's patronage.

In my youth as in this year of grace Paris created women's fashions. At that time, however, the latest styles were only for the wealthy and the less well-to-do had to wait until the wholesale trade had copied them and brought them within reach of the middle-class purse. The so-called lower classes – the shop assistants, the domestic servants – were content to dress themselves in modes that limped a long way after the prevailing fashion while the country folk – farmers' wives and the like – continued to follow styles which had been in vogue ten, twenty or thirty years before. So did many elderly women of means. The stage is a fairly good guide to current fashions. Well, when W.S. Penley wished to characterise a wealthy and eccentric old lady in *Charley's Aunt*, produced in the nineties, he dressed her in the style of the sixties, so that the audience should recognise her for what she was supposed to be, an elderly maiden aunt.

One result of this leisurely percolation of the Paris mode was that women's types were everywhere sharply differentiated. When my mother lived in Paris the streets in the morning, she used to tell me, were full of women, bareheaded with beautifully brushed hair, in stiffly pleated snow-white skirts or in their peasant dress – *bonnes* out marketing. Such types were still to be seen in Paris when I paid my first visit there in 1903 but, save for a few Breton nurses in national dress, they are no longer to be encountered to-day.

At that period one could usually distinguish a German girl by the amplitude of her curves and the beauty of her tresses which most of them wore, à la Gretchen in *Faust*, braided about the head. Also German women were the worst-dressed in the world. On leaving school in 1901, for the purpose of learning German, I spent a year in a family at Cleves, a small town on the Lower Rhine, known in history as the birthplace of Henry VIII's rejected spouse, Anne of Cleves. Cleves had about 15,000 inhabitants and I moved in such society as it

boasted. Believe it or not, there was not a single girl or woman in that town that was dressed within two or three or even five years of the current mode. And Berlin, when I arrived there as Reuter's correspondent in 1904, was scarcely better. German women in those days had little money to spend on their appearance and those who had it, no taste. Both at Cleves and Berlin I met plenty of pretty and charming German women, but I could number on the fingers of one hand those with the slightest claim to *chic*.

The vastly increased importance of woman as consumer, coupled with the influence of the motion pictures, has changed all that. The popular Press throughout the world publicises the latest Paris trend almost before it has reached the show-rooms of the couturiers and the moment a new style is launched, the wholesale trade, which has bought the model honestly, and the copyists, who have stolen it, get to work. More than this, the movies and the exquisitely turned out fashion photographs in the women's periodicals display types, not only of clothes but also of feminine loveliness, upon which, irrespective of nationality, the modern young woman delights to model herself. The result is that, wherever you go to-day, you are confronted by Greta Garbos, Marlene Dietrichs and Joan Crawfords, not to mention the much publicised society belles of Europe and America.

This catering for the woman consumer has altered the very countenance of the world's capitals. Oxford Street in London, Fifth Avenue in New York, the Boulevard Haussmann in Paris, are now the daily Mecca of hordes of bargain-hungry or desultory 'window-shopping' women, and the same is true of the shopping centres in every considerable city of the globe. As long as I can remember, Oxford Street was a busy thoroughfare, but even at Christmas-time, in the years of which I write, its pavements were never so congested as they are to-day.

William Whiteley, Universal Provider, device two globes, was the great department store in our neighbourhood; it was indeed one of the most considerable, as it was the earliest, in London. As a child I often saw the old Pasha himself, destined to be murdered by his natural son, with his frock-coat and long

weepers, acting as a sort of super-shopwalker. Whiteley's used to pride itself on being able to produce anything, including, it is said, a consignment of fleas for Alfred de Rothschild's private zoo at Tring. I only know that, as a young reporter, I once traced an authentic case in which Whiteley's had supplied a best man at a wedding. The happy couple came from Cork and, knowing no one in London, applied to Whiteley's. That enterprising emporium came up to scratch and produced a shop-walker from the silk department, a very personable and unaffected young gentleman, as I remember, when I interviewed him at his lodgings near Westbourne Grove.

One of the most striking changes that has come over the British public in the period which has elapsed since my youth is in its attitude towards the Army. In my early days traces were still discernible of the Iron Duke's not always concealed opinion that the rank-and-file, as a whole, were a precious collection of scallywags, as in his heyday to a certain extent they were. Soldiers in uniform were excluded from the saloon bars of the public-houses and refused admission to any part of the theatre except the gallery. When I had a flat at Clement's Inn, shortly before the Great War, the outside porter, an ex-colour-sergeant of the Coldstream Guards, and a man of irreproachable character, told me that when, having enlisted, he went home to Yorkshire to show himself in uniform to the family, his father, a hard-headed farmer, met him at the door and sternly ordered him out. 'I'd sooner see ye dead in your coffin,' the old man cried, 'than think that any son of mine would disgrace himself by taking the shilling. Go ye back across that threshold and don't ye darken my doors again until ye've taken off that scarlet coat!' It was not actually until the South African War, which brought so many volunteers flocking to the colours, that this old prejudice began to disappear.

My earliest impression of the British Army centres about the rear view of the doughty old Duke of Cambridge, who was Commander-in-Chief for so many years that, if my memory does not betray me, they had to abolish the post in order to get rid of him. There was a good deal of it – of the rear view,

that is – and the most conspicuous part of it was clothed in white buckskin breeches. In scarlet Field-Marshal's tunic, plumes tossing and sabre clattering, the old gentleman went cavorting across that salubrious champaign known as Wormwood Scrubs – at that time a regular place of exercise for the Household troops – screaming incoherently at the glittering staff about him. One small boy among the spectators was convinced that some major catastrophe had befallen for he had yet to recognise, from personal experience, the authentic note of frenzied objurgation in which, from time immemorial, senior officers in the Guards have voiced their displeasure. On the occasion in question his nurse's awed 'Look! It's the Dook!' identified for him that Prince who is affectionately remembered in the ante-rooms of British messes to this day as the author of a celebrated *obiter dictum* in regard to the deplorably promiscuous tendencies of young officers.

I caught a glimpse of Queen Victoria only once – you must remember that in the years within my recollection the Queen was very seldom seen in public – a little old lady in black satin with a mauve sunshade, round as a ball, emerging in a carriage from Paddington Station. It is interesting to recall that, on the Queen's arrival at or departure from one or other of the big London termini, the red carpet was spread all the way from the train to her carriage. I remember being struck by the curious almost acidulous reluctance of her smile, much boomed about that time in a press photograph labelled 'Her Majesty's Gracious Smile'. I was reminded of it, years afterwards, when I was received at the White House in Washington by President Coolidge. He, too, had the wry air of biting into a lemon when he smiled – he looked as if he had been 'weaned on a pickle', Alice Longworth, Theodore Roosevelt's brilliant daughter said of him. But his was a poker face in repose, whereas I thought that the Widow of Windsor looked downright peevish.

Queen Victoria was a respected rather than a beloved figure in my youth. She instilled awe and the nation was proud of her as an institution; but she was much criticised. My father was an ultra-loyal citizen, whom the rank sedition talked by

some of our Irish friends in London at the time of the Boer War drove perfectly frantic. But he and others like him resented the Queen's almost complete withdrawal from public functions after the Prince Consort's death and were not afraid of saying so. They also disapproved of the way in which she kept the Prince of Wales sequestered from any participation in the business of State. The real fact of the matter is that the old Queen's conception of the monarchy grew, during her long and glorious reign, as much out of date as the installation of the Royal residences and raised a barrier between her and her people which only her death broke down.

CHAPTER IV

THE IRISH OF IT (WITH A DASH OF ITALIAN)

MY mother was a seventh child, and as I was her seventh, I suppose I should attribute to that circumstance such luck as life has brought my way. One can be grateful for having enjoyed more than a fair share of good fortune without questioning the truth of 'Jacky' Fisher's definition of luck as 'the careful previous calculation of what you will leave to chance'. Such, at least, has been my experience in life. Fate is a foul fighter and no fellow can guard altogether against its blows below the belt. But in my experience the consistently successful people I have known are those who habitually leave no contingency unprovided for except the little final nudge that tips the scale in favour or against. Emile Gaboriau, whom, as the father of the *roman policier*, all detective story writers should salute with a wide sweep of the hat, says in one of his novels, 'There is a master who without effort surpasses us all, and that master is chance.'

My mother's is among the oldest families in Ireland. The Skerretts of Finavara, in the County Clare, were one of the so-called Fourteen Tribes of Galway, settled on the shores of Galway Bay since the thirteenth century. Each of the tribes had its qualifying adjective by which it was traditionally described, as, for instance, 'the litigious Lynches' 'the sporty Martyns'. The Skerretts were always 'the positive Skerretts'. The name of Skerrett is said to have been originally *Huscared* which, I have heard, is Basque for 'black', and the first Skerrett is reputed to have come over to Ireland from Bilbao, in the train of the Norman knights. That some trace of the Basque survives in our family is

suggested by the fact that I who have inherited the ruddy complexion and black hair of my forbears, when staying at St. Jean de Luz some years ago was hailed as a brother Basque by the pelota players who frequented the humble and very typical Basque restaurant where I took my meals.

Skerretts have played their part in history. One, Nicholas, was Archbishop of Tuam in the sixteenth century and is referred to in old records as belonging to an Irish family 'even then very ancient'; while another, John Byrne Skerrett, who raised a battalion of Galway Fencibles, commanded a brigade in the Peninsular War under Wellington, was promoted Major-General and was killed at the disastrous night attack on Berg-op-Zoom in 1807. His heroic death and that of General Gore who fell with him are commemorated by a monument in St. Paul's. Branches of the family are scattered throughout the world. In the person of the late Sir Charles Skerrett, a Skerrett was Chief Justice of New Zealand and in the United States the Skerretts of Germantown, Pennsylvania, are descendants of a Skerrett who emigrated to Ohio about 1820. Years ago, at a luncheon party in Berlin given by the late Charles R. Flint, a well-known American business man, I identified a member of this branch, who happened to be my neighbour at table, by his signet ring which bore the seal, a squirrel, and motto 'Primus ultimusque in acie', of the Skerretts. He was Robert Skerrett, then in the Navy Department at Washington.

Early in the eighteenth century the senior branch of the family, which was my mother's, moved from Galway to Clare. The family seat of Finavara (which means in Irish 'Queen of the Sea') still survives, though shorn of its ancient glories. Four-square and stark it faces the Atlantic Ocean in what, until Henry Ford brought out his celebrated 'T' model and revolutionised transport, was surely one of the wildest and most inaccessible parts of the west coast of Ireland. Before they had a Ford in the village it was a three-hour drive by jaunting car from the railway at Athenry over rough roads that wound their way between stone walls fencing barren fields where goats picked a miserable living among the limestone

rocks and the acrid turf smoke curled up into the soft West of Ireland rain from the tiny white-washed cabins. It was on this drive that, when a schoolboy, for the first and last time in my life, I heard 'keening' at a funeral. Villagers bore the coffin up a winding path to the churchyard and behind the bier a cluster of women wrung their hands and sobbed aloud on a curious, high-pitched note.

Seals play on the rocks at the foot of the lawn at Finavara, which broods over the grey-green Atlantic outstretched before it and the naked brown hills that sentinel the bay. From the drawing-room windows, 'Faith, an' ye cud see America if ye had the eyes,' Coly Fahy, the lodgekeeper's son, who used to take me fishing for mackerel and sea-trout, would tell me.

The peasants are Irish-speaking and at the local church the non-Latin prayers are recited, and sermons preached, in Irish. It was from an old tenant of Finavara, a certain Martin Minogue, that Lady Gregory derived much of the dialogue of her Irish plays. Martin was a character, and like so many of the Irish peasantry of that type, he revelled in being a character, and I have always had an uneasy feeling that, in rolling forth in his soft and caressing brogue the picturesque, poetic phrases in which he delighted, he was talking for effect – mind you, there's nothing entrances the Irish peasant more than a little, gentle leg-pull. In my young days Martin, who was a rare old humbug, was a great crony of mine. He had only one eye, and, as Dickens said about a similar lacuna in Mr. Squeers, popular prejudice runs in favour of two: I can still see him winking it at me and saying, 'Sure, an' isn't your honour's family an' me own th'ouldest in Ireland?'

The Major Skerrett who built the house – incidentally, it never had a bathroom or any water laid on above the kitchen or any light save lamps and candles – seems to have been a bit of a rake (he was known locally as 'the wicked Major'). My mother once told me that, when she was a small girl, a couple of harmless old peasant men, openly called Johnny and Paddy Skerrett, and bearing a marked resemblance to the men of the family, haunted the kitchens of Finavara and did odd jobs about the house. The major died before his only son, my grandfather,

was born, so that the heir, succeeding as a minor, was known throughout the countryside, and especially in the hunting field, where he was a popular and familiar figure, as 'Minor Skerrett'. A sturdy figure with round face, blue eyes and bushy black whiskers, he farmed and hunted and went up for the season to Dublin where he owned a fine Georgian mansion in Mountjoy Square, now alas! given over to slums. He died of a chill caught out hunting, before I was born.

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My grandmother, who married my grandfather at the age of seventeen, bore him ten sons and four daughters. She was a MacMahon, of old West of Ireland stock, and her family was friendly with Daniel O'Connell. In her old age she liked to tell us children how, as a young girl, she drove through the streets of Ennis with the Liberator. In the romantic fashion of those days the grateful citizens presented him with a laurel wreath which, with a courtly gesture, he placed on the dark hair of the maiden at his side, gallantly saluting her with a kiss.

The Hunger of 1845 all but ruined my grandfather, as it ruined so many Irish landowners. He gave all he could spare to his starving tenantry and as Deputy Lieutenant and J.P. co-operated actively in the relief measures instituted by the British Government. I have seen some of the elaborate and punctiliously worded letters he exchanged with sundry great English noblemen sent from London to administer the relief. The stone walls which to this day meander aimlessly up and down the barren hills upon which Finavara looks out speak of the purposeless tasks to which, under the austere, reforming eye of Queen Victoria's Ministers, the peasants were set, in return for food.

By that strange fatality which seems to hang over so many ancient Irish families, all but one of the ten Skerrett boys were in their graves before reaching the age of fifty. Several of them lie buried with my grandfather in the Skerrett family vault in the ruins of Curcumroe Abbey, a romantic and beautiful spot, where the peewits cry and the trees rustle their branches against crumbling arch and fallen pillar. They were all big men, handsome and with charming manners, living hard and

drinking hard, after the manner of the Ireland in which their adolescence was spent, keen sportsmen, who shot and hunted and fished. They belonged to the Catholic gentry of Ireland, men of parts, who had received a classical education at good Catholic schools in England, so that they could quote a tag from Horace with the best: several of them took degrees at that renowned seat of learning, Trinity College, Dublin.

Their tragedy was that the estate, already impoverished by the vicissitudes of land tenure in Ireland and encumbered by debt was no longer able to support so many of them. Four entered the army, one was lost at sea, one, as in most Irish Catholic families, became a priest. The priest uncle was called Hyacinth, a Christian name that is less uncommon in Ireland than it is in England, and as 'Father Hycie' was widely known through Clare and Galway. To this day the old folks at Finavara love to tell stories about 'Captain Willie', the eldest son, who, on my grandfather's death, resigned from the army and took over the management of the estate. By all accounts he was the biggest and the jolliest of the brothers, with a chest measurement of 48 inches, I have been told. One of his wilder exploits, still talked of over the turf fires on winter evenings, consisted in driving a tandem at breakneck speed in the dark down Corkscrew Hill, a dangerous descent in the neighbourhood of Finavara, on his way back from Galway Races: anyone who has been to this celebrated West of Ireland race meeting knows that sobriety is not the strong point of the crowds attending it.

To-day there is no male Skerrett left to carry on the line, for the last male survivor, my cousin, Charles Skerrett, died in 1936, as a monk in Belgium, a Benedictine of the famous Abbey of Maredsous, without ever having married. And so the ancient line is extinct, and the old house, to-day a mere shell of its former self, gazes forlornly out over the bay where once the strapping Skerrett boys swam and fished and sailed the *Banshee*, the family ketch, in the wildest of weather across to Galway City for supplies.

It is a good many years since I was last at Finavara. The house is now dismantled, if not actually pulled down, its lodges

and cottages disposed of to strangers. But even in my boyhood days, when my godfather, Valentine Skerrett, the last of the Skerretts to farm the estate, was still alive – I had two godfathers and both were called Valentine – I never saw the old place without being aware of the air of gentle melancholy brooding over it – the long-neglected lawn, once laid out with rare trees and flowering shrubs by an Italian landscape artist reputedly imported by the ‘Wicked Major’, the walled garden with its fruit trees, especially a ‘lady’s finger’ apple, more delicious than any I ever tasted, and a hoary mulberry laden with fruit; the circular emplacement of the ‘rath’, or ancient Irish fort, in the wood high above the house where the Atlantic gusts had blown the tamarisks into all manner of fantastic shapes; the beach below, known as the ‘flaggy shore’, from the flat limestone boulders scattered there, where we would recline on the warm stone after bathing. There was a ‘holy well’ near by, and legends of *banshees* and *pookas*, and an old tradition according to which a flight of wild swans passed honking over the house the night before a Skerrett died. Dusk was long drawn out and the sunsets were magnificent: the flaming majesty of the western sky filled my boyish imagination with memories of all I had read of the twilight of the Celtic race and the vanished glories of ancient Miletia.

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Talleyrand said that no one who had not known France before the French Revolution had ever savoured the sweetness of life. Those whose acquaintance with Ireland dates since the War can have no realisation what fun Ireland was before rebellion and more latterly the austere, academic theories of President De Valera destroyed the gentry and handed the country over to the small shopkeeping class of the cities to run. In the France Talleyrand spoke of, ‘la douceur de la vie’ included a suffering peasantry, and all through the West of Ireland I used to know the hunger line was very near. For example, my Uncle Stephen Cowan – he married my mother’s eldest sister – with whom I spent many summer holidays in the County Galway, paid his farm hands the local rate of ten shillings a week, and he was a kind-hearted employer, according to his

lights. The only meat these men and their families ever saw, apart from an occasional rabbit, were the joints my aunt would sometimes send them of a Sunday.

But to a small English schoolboy, fresh from the narrowness of a London suburb, the staid outlook of English life under Victoria, the Irish scene was a continual and exhilarating diversion. Uncle Stephen attended all the fairs – the great horse fair at Ballinasloe in September, the no less celebrated Banagher fair – and took me with him, a drive of forty miles there and back sometimes, in the best outside car, gleaming with paint and varnish, behind Prince, the black gelding, in the crested silver harness. My uncle would turn out very smartly on these occasions, in one of those sawn-off black felt hats – what Londoners used to call a Muller, because Muller, the train murderer, had sported one – natty blue overcoat, yellow dogskin gloves and a rug tucked round his knees as he reclined on his side of the jaunting car, one elbow propped on the cushioned top of the boot. He seemed to know, and to stop to speak to, everybody: I used to get the fidgets during his endless chats with farmers who had brought horses or cattle to sell.

Still, there was plenty to see. The haggling was vastly entertaining, conducted as it often was by mysterious intermediaries who went between buyer and seller ‘making the price’. The deal struck, the go-between would place the hands of the parties together, and the inevitable adjournment for a round of drinks to seal the bargain would follow. A glass of whiskey – it was a good half-tumbler of neat spirit – cost, I think, fourpence in those halcyon days. There was a lot of drinking at the fairs and mostly a fiddler or a piper, often a blind man, in the corner of the liquor shop or bar to liven things up with a jig.

I played cricket with the sons of the sergeant in charge of the Royal Irish Constabulary barrack, a fascinating place smelling of carbolic, with lines of shining rifles and handcuffs on the walls. The local parish priest took me salmon-fishing in the Shannon at Meelick – of course, without a licence; the first fish I ever caught in my life was a 5½ lb. pike, in the lake at Tully, my uncle’s place. I took it with a most formidable

looking spinner which Callaghan, the local haberdasher, cajoled me into buying. Callaghan was head of the local branch of the Land League; Uncle Stephen, who was pro-English like the vast majority of the Irish gentry, usually referred to him as 'that blackguard'. I intended only to get some sixpenny hooks; but Callaghan, who must have been a good salesman, scored one against Uncle Stephen by palming off on me this enormous spinner. The price was 6s. 6d., which swallowed up the greater part of my available capital, which was ten shillings.

Most of the gentry round about were Anglo-Irish, viz. Protestant, some living in mansions that dated from Cromwellian times, and a gay, sporting lot they were, the women as well as the men. Well do I remember my astonishment, when emerging from the railway-station at Banagher one day, on hearing a very attractive widow, a friend of my aunt's, crying shrilly, 'Where the bloody hell has that damned porter of mine got to?'

Memories of Captain Boycott, the 'boycotted' land agent who gave English dictionaries a new word, were still fresh. We sometimes went over to Portumna to tennis parties at the house of Shaw Tennant, agent for the highly unpopular Lord Clanricarde, the eccentric peer who left his great fortune to his nephew, the present Lord Harewood, the Princess Royal's husband. Shaw Tennant was under constant police protection; I found it an odd experience to play tennis with a couple of stalwart R.I.C. men with rifles prowling on the sidelines. My cousin, the late Jasper White, who was Resident Magistrate at Loughrea, another troubled area, was similarly guarded.

One of Grandfather Skerrett's sisters married Valentine French, brother of one Anthony French who founded in rather romantic circumstances the old-established Florentine bank of French and Lemon – its Rome house figures in 'The Count of Monte Cristo' in the guise of Messrs. Thomson and French of Rome. Anthony French came from a very old Galway family and originally fled to Italy to escape the penal laws in Ireland. The story goes that he was faced with the alternative

of abjuring his faith or seeing most of his estates confiscated. He had resolved upon the former course and was on the way to take the oath when his horse threw him. The incident made such an impression on his mind that he decided to forfeit the property and flee Ireland for ever. He settled at Florence where he opened a bank and in due course became associated in a great road-making scheme promoted by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. In recognition of his services he and his partners all received titles and thereafter were known in Florence as 'The Knights of the Road'. Anthony became Baron French. He married a daughter of the great Florentine house of Mazzinghi and their home in Florence was one of the principal rendezvous of Anglo-Italian society.

Baron French's brother, Valentine, who had married Grandfather Skerrett's sister Marion—always addressed by my mother as 'Aunt French' in the Victorian manner—had likewise settled in Florence. Uncle and Aunt French were childless. They were staying with Grandfather Skerrett at Finavara when my grandmother was expecting her seventh child—she and my grandfather had eight children before he was thirty! Mrs. Valentine French had recently been informed that she must resign herself to the prospect of a childless marriage and she extracted a promise from my grandmother that, if the expectant infant was a girl, the Frenchs should be allowed to bring her up as their own.

That infant was my mother. With considerable reluctance my grandparents redeemed their word and when the little Matilda Anna, as the child was named, was only four, Uncle French appeared and bore her away across the Channel to Switzerland and thence by diligence through the Alpine passes to Tuscany. The year was 1853 and conditions in Italy were still extremely primitive. The passport which Uncle French obtained for himself and his small charge was long preserved at Finavara as a memento of a wearisome and dangerous journey.

My mother was born in 1849 and from the age of four, except for a period of three years when she went to a convent school outside Dublin for reasons of health, she passed the whole of

her life in Florence up to the time of her marriage to my father in 1871. Thus, her childhood and girlhood were spent in the soul-stirring atmosphere of the fight for Italian unity. She could remember hearing the shots fired by the deliriously excited Florentines in 1858 to celebrate the expulsion of the last Austrian Grand Duke of Tuscany and seeing the entry of the King of Sardinia's troops with green sprigs thrust in the muzzles of their rifles. In 1865 Florence became the capital of the new Italy and, as the seat of the court and Parliament, was the centre of a tremendously active social and political life.

In those days the city of Dante Alighieri boasted a large and fashionable British colony, certain members of which, it should be said, were reputed to have left their country for their country's good. It was a smart and amusing society, enlivened by the excitement of the tremendous changes which were on the way to culminate in the fall of Rome and the union of Italy, and Baron and Baroness French and the Valentine Frenchs between them knew everybody worth knowing in the Italian as well as the British world of Florence. The little Signorina Skerrett, sweetly fresh as an Irish rose, danced her way through the declining years of the Papal States and the Second Empire in France in the arms of the handsome Italian officers. One of them, whose attentions were frowned upon by Aunt French, sent my mother, in a despairing gesture, a bouquet of roses tied up with *crêpe*.

Incidentally, my mother told me that, already in the sixties – note the date! – it was quite common for her and other unmarried girls of her set in Florence to smoke. Nor was this a matter of a surreptitious cigarette enjoyed in the privacy of their bedrooms. Her aunt, albeit a great stickler for etiquette, saw no harm in her niece and her girl friends accepting a cigarette from the young men who called at the house after dinner, although no woman would smoke in a public place. I fancy that some Americans, who remember the miniature cigars, or *cigarillos*, of their grandfathers' day may think that the *cigarillo* antedated the cigarette. I am not sure about that, but cigarettes first became popular in Western European society as long ago as the 1850's when British and French

officers returning from the Crimean War, who had picked up the habit from their Turkish allies and Russian prisoners, introduced it. When I was a child, many Englishmen, like the American cowboy still, 'rolled their own': my father had an ingenious little machine of rollers, which he had bought in Paris and with which we children used to make his cigarettes with a French paper and a very light Virginia tobacco called 'Mayblossom'.

It was the intention of my mother's adopted parents that Tilly, as she was always called, should make a good match. They were much displeased, therefore, when a young English newspaper man, who arrived in Florence in 1868 to represent Reuter's at the Italian seat of government and who amused himself by editing a British colony magazine in his spare time, fell in love with her and she with him. Then, at Bad Ems, King William of Prussia – he spoke to my mother once when, as a young girl, she was staying at Bad Ems, a benevolent old gentleman, with white whiskers – sent word to the French Ambassador, 'I have nothing more to say to this gentleman,' Bismarck's unscrupulous pen falsified an historic dispatch, France declared war on Prussia and the lovers were swiftly parted by a telegram ordering Reuter's Florence correspondent to the French capital. But at long last, peace soared to earth amid the smoking ruins of Commune-scarred Paris and the bloated corpses of General Gallifet's 'packets' of shot Communards and before the Third Republic was a year old the young people stood before the altar in Dublin.

They started life in Paris in a flat in a tall house, now demolished, which stood at the Rond Point of the Champs Elysée. At first my mother was rather scared and not a little perplexed by the bands of gay young sparks who came nightly knocking at the street door. She did not fathom – and my father, with Victorian consideration for the blushes of innocence, did not see fit to enlighten her – the significance of the bold house number, *le grand numéro*, painted on the doorpost. With the advent of the Republic of Monsieur Thiers, the house on the Rond Point, a notorious bagnio under the Second Empire, had reverted to its original bourgeois uses.

What shapes a man's career? Is it atavism? Is it environment? At school and for some time after, I had no particular leaning towards any calling. It was a chance remark of my father's, that he could get me into Reuter's, which sent me, without any great enthusiasm at that time, into newspaper work; I can say of myself as Stéphan Pichon, French Foreign Minister and one of the artisans of the Entente Cordiale, confided to me about his own beginnings, '*Je suis entré dans le journalisme comme un moineau dans une cathédrale.*'

What part of that literary dilettante, my paternal grandfather, what part of Grandfather Skerrett, the fox-hunting squire, and his ten Nimrod sons, sent me careering for years about the world as a newspaper correspondent, to finish up, after twenty years of Fleet Street, as a writer of adventurous romance, of crime fiction? Maybe, I acquired from my father's sire a certain proficiency in the classics, a certain facility for foreign languages; from 'Minor Skerrett' and his harum-scarum sons, a certain restlessness of spirit that has kept me moving round in search of fresh experiences ever since I reached man's estate. But I do not see where I garnered the makings of a novelist – such as they are.

The only positive thing I can add to these reflections is that, at one important moment of my life, my Irish blood spoke up loud and clear. When I joined up in the Great War, it seemed predestined, so naturally did the decision come, that I should seek a commission in an Irish regiment.

I went to the Irish Guards. My choice was determined by much the same considerations as those of a London policeman who, one day in early 1918, presented himself in uniform at the Irish Guards Headquarters at Wellington Barracks, where I was employed for some months after being wounded, and applied to enlist in the regiment. 'But you're not an Irishman,' the Lieutenant-Colonel pointed out. 'Why do you want to join the Irish Guards?' 'Well, sir,' said the bobby, 'I likes the looks of 'em!' Which was much my own case, for during the time I was at the front as war correspondent in 1915 I had seen a certain amount of this famous regiment. I was

particularly impressed by the 'happy family' spirit prevailing among the officers. A chance meeting with that gallant and charming gentleman, the late Lord Lansdowne, who, as Lord Kerry, then commanded the Reserve Battalion at home, did the rest.

My story about the policeman brings to my mind a fantastic episode of the War. One of the Guards Brigades was coming out of the line when outside Brigade Headquarters the almost incredible sight of a London policeman in uniform was disclosed, helmet, whistle and all. The men went wild with joy and every company as it filed past gave the unexpected apparition a rousing cheer which filled the unfortunate bobby with embarrassment. It subsequently appeared that he had escorted a deserter, arrested in London, back to his unit at the front.

CHAPTER V

YOUNG GERMANY, 1901

WITH this strong continental influence both on my father's and mother's sides, I suppose it was fated that I, like them, should spend long years of my life abroad. Subconsciously for he never mentioned the matter to me, I fancy my father had always intended that I should follow him into journalism; at any rate at a very early age – I cannot have been more than eight or nine – he began to initiate me into the craft. Each morning a Reuter messenger would arrive with handwritten carbon copies – for typewriters were not yet in general usage – of the messages received during the night or dispatched overseas. It was my duty, while my father drank his early morning tea in bed, to read these aloud to him.

One morning I read out light-heartedly, 'Carnot assassinated Lyons,' which brought my parent leaping with a shout from his couch. Afterwards, I remember, there was a boy at school with me whose father had taken him, as a special treat, to see Caserio, assassin of the French President, guillotined. It seems an odd sort of treat for an urchin of nine or ten – how odd I never realised until, years later, I myself was present at the execution of Liabeuf, the apache, in Paris – but there's no accounting for tastes! Round the prep. room stove we would make the hero of this unusual experience go over the scene again and again in its smallest details – how the knife crashed down, the blood spurted, the head rolled, how one small boy in the crowd was deathly sick there, in front of the scaffold, clasping his parent's hand, and how nightmares visited him thereafter for weeks. In the light of our modern knowledge of the influence of such shocks upon the psychology of the child, I have often pondered on the effect this gruesome

ordeal must have had on the unfortunate youngster's mind and character.

On leaving school I had no idea what career I should follow. Although I had edited the school magazine, I had made no mark in English and it is within my recollection that my English essays were but indifferently adequate. During the period I spent at home while the matter of my future was being debated, my father encouraged me to increase my acquaintance with the English and French classics. I can remember with what distaste I laboriously ploughed through Racine and Corneille: it was not until years later, when I saw *Phèdre* at the Comédie Française, that I began to savour the grace and marble-hard polish of French classical verse. At the same time my father continued my introduction to journalism by making me summarise the leading articles of *The Times*, and reversing the process, expand into newspaper form the Reuter message in 'cablese' that arrived at home in the daily batch.

Also, from his store of knowledge of the craft, he gave me advice both sage and practical. He would quote to me three rules for foreign correspondents which he had in his earlier days from de Blowitz, the famous Paris correspondent of *The Times*. These were (1) Always know your own paper (i.e. its daily contents); (2) Never reveal your sources and (3) Never show a notebook. It was well known that de Blowitz had a prodigious memory. His greatest feat was performed at the Berlin Congress of 1878, in memorising the preamble to the Treaty (all the clauses of which, apart from the preamble, were already in his possession) which his informant refused to let him copy out, permitting him only to read it.

The story of how de Blowitz, by means of the exchange of hats at the Kaiserhof Café in Berlin, obtained the clauses of Berlin Treaty, which were slipped into the lining of a hat left behind by an emissary by previous arrangement, is familiar: what is probably less well-known is that the man with the hat was the late Earl Balfour, then attached to the British Delegation to the Congress, as the late Sir Frank Lascelles, formerly British Ambassador to Germany, once told me. A photograph of the British Delegation, grouped about the

bowed and venerable form of Dizzy, with A. J. Balfour as a slender, bewhiskered young man, still hangs in the British Embassy in Berlin.

Every foreign correspondent who has the interests of his newspaper at stake and knows his job has to do a little gentlemanly palm-greasing at times, chiefly of telegraph officials, with a view to expediting his messages. My kind friend, the famous 'C', of the British Secret Service, once described a favourite subordinate to me as 'a damned judgmatical briber'. Well, bribery is a tricky business, requiring quick thinking, resource and considerable judgment. Here, too, my father furnished me with some useful tips which were to be of much service to me in the course of my roamings abroad. He imparted to me the device of dividing the money (such '*douceurs*' must always be administered in hard cash) into three parts – the least you think the bribee will accept, what you believe he will settle for and the top figure to which you are prepared to go.

It appeared that he had tested this process with complete success upon the Director of Telegraphs in Florence in the sixties at a time when the local authorities were putting difficulties in the way of the transmission of his dispatches from Florence to London. Walking in the street with this functionary who urbanely regretted the inexorability of the official attitude, my parent slipped the first sum, the lowest, in his hand. The fingers closed upon it while, with the greatest politeness, the Italian continued to assert that the matter was most difficult to arrange. He continued to hum and haw after the second *douceur* had been passed over and it was not until the third wad of notes had changed hands that he cheered up and promised to see what could be done.

Potential bribees in my experience are usually exceedingly delicate-minded and it is essential that, in such transactions there should be no mention of money. Another method which my father successfully tried out on a telegraph official – under the Commune this time – was the familiar Russian one of dropping a bank note on the floor in full view of the party to be bribed. If the sum is right the bribee puts his foot on it:

if he wants more he either picks it up and returns it, or waits until the requisite sum appears on the carpet. Down in Portugal once I encountered an official who handled a difficult situation in a most delicate and Don-like way. The censorship was considerably delaying my dispatches and I sent my interpreter to interview the Censor and indicate that I should be prepared to compensate him for his trouble in speeding up the censoring of my telegrams. My interpreter, a singularly obtuse person, returned to say that the matter was in order and that I should have no further ground for complaint, and added that in his opinion it would be tactless in the extreme to offer money to a Portuguese functionary. I was much edified by this evidence of Republican integrity until, shortly after, I discovered that a milreis (five francs) was being regularly added to the cost of my messages. It did not appear on the official receipt but the change was always a milreis short. The fee seemed to me exceedingly moderate and as, thereafter, my telegrams were no more delayed, I never questioned the over-charge.

In this matter of telegraphic delays one of the most baffling replies I ever received in answer to a complaint fell from the lips of the Director of Telegraphs in Dublin before the War. It was during the Ulster troubles and the *Daily Mail* had informed me in an irate message that a telegram I had filed on the previous evening had only been delivered next day, and consequently missed the paper. Full of wrath I rushed round to the General Post Office and demanded the Director of Telegraphs. 'Are you aware,' I vociferated to the very placid gentleman who received me, 'that a telegram I sent to the *Daily Mail* last evening took over twelve hours to reach London?' 'I wouldn't be surprised,' was the disarming rejoinder, spoken in the broadest of Dublin brogues. After that there seemed to be nothing more to be said.

In the year 1900, which was when I left school, German prestige was at its zenith. Stirred from their Victorian lethargy by Germany's growing commercial rivalry, the British were beginning to discover that, as a race, we were woefully

deficient in the knowledge of foreign tongues: all over the globe the highly-trained, active and polyglot German commercial traveller was beating ours, hands down. As a foreign language, German, it was averred, was more necessary to the young Briton at the outset of his career than French; so to Germany it was ultimately decided I should go for a twelvemonth.

My knowledge of modern Germany and of the German language at that time was precisely nil. My actual acquaintance with Germans was restricted to the somewhat nondescript specimens, mostly Jewish, among my father's colleagues, to waiters and to the German bandsmen, in queer, tarnished military caps and walrus moustaches who would play '*Ach, du lieber Augustin!*' and '*Klänge aus dem Wienerwald*', outside our house at Notting Hill on Thursdays, and to an occasional young Teuton, with hair weirdly cut and funny clothes, full of bows and smirks, whom my sisters might invite home from some Kensington boarding-house.

For the rest, my impression of Germany was of a land inhabited by placid toymakers and cuckoo-clock-makers, who smoked long pipes and said '*Ach!*'; and of a vague ogre called Bismarck who was invariably accompanied by an enormous hound; of sausages and dachshunds; of the goose-step and marching troops; and of a posturing Emperor, who had a passion for making foolish speeches.

Our reverses in South Africa and our failure, at the end of the first year of war, to overcome the burghers' resistance gravely disturbed my father. He often spoke of the German menace, of Germany's growing challenge to Britain, both in the world markets and on the sea. He, who, in the French Chamber of Deputies, had heard the vain-glorious boastings of French generals in 1870 about the Army being 'ready to the last gaiter-button', was filled with misgivings lest one day Britain, as softened by prosperity and as unprepared for war as the Second Empire had been, should in turn find herself confronted by this new and formidable opponent.

I am afraid that my father's jeremiads did not impress me. He had a sombre side to his nature on which we liked to rally him, as, for example, when he would speculate glumly on the

possibility of Reuter's collapsing into ruins and of his finding himself with his large family on the street. His eyesight troubled him at times when, half humorously, he would lament that what he called 'a dog and string' would ultimately be his portion. Perhaps fortunately, the young do not learn from the experience of the old, for the caution of age is the enemy of enterprise. I left for Germany with the sensation of heading for the tents of a friendly people and the firm intention of repaying the hospitality awaiting me by a kindly condescension and a sympathetic determination to tolerate, if I could not understand, the eccentricities of a Continental nation.

It was the accident of a suitable family, with a son of my own age, being found in a lower Rhenish town that decreed Cleves as my place of residence. The claims to fame of Cleves, with a population, at that time, of about 15,000, may be briefly summarised. Part of the Lohengrin legend is placed there: the mystery knight is said to have appeared in his boat drawn by swans on the so-called Kermesdal, a piece of water at the foot of the Schwanenburg, the fortified castle of the Dukes of Cleves where Anne of Cleves, vulgarly but probably accurately described as 'a Flanders mare' by her Royal intended, spent her girlhood. 'Duke of Cleves' was one of the titles of the Kings of Prussia and at one time that notable soldier, Prince Maurice of Nassau, lived in the town. Lastly Cleves was one of the two centres of the Kneipp cold water cure in Germany. Patients were soundly doused with ice-cold water, or made to walk bare-foot in the dew, then tucked into bed, dripping wet, between the sheets. The Kneipp cure was highly rated as a specific against certain nervous disorders.

Situated within a dozen miles of the Dutch frontier – the Hoek of Holland-Bâle express passed through daily – in the neighbourhood of one of the few hilly regions of Holland, Cleves proved to be a sleepy little town, with open kennels in the cobbled streets that clambered steeply up and down. It stood up in a plain which was a perfect old Dutch landscape, with pollard-fringed dykes, windmills and the spires of rare villages and, a few miles distant, the broad and rushing Rhine.

It boasted a garrison in the shape of a battalion of the 56th Prussian Infantry Regiment Vogel von Falckenstein. Once in the War I ran across a German prisoner, hardly more than a boy, who bore on his shoulder-straps the familiar number.

I questioned him in German. He was a Clevianer, a child of Cleves. I chatted to him about his native town, which had been my home for a year, every street and almost every leading family of which had been well-known to me. I did not disclose the source of my knowledge and he grew more and more bewildered: I think he must have taken away from our interview a high opinion of the omniscience of British army officers.

My host at Cleves was a retired pharmacist, an Apotheker, and an almost sealed pattern of German bourgeois. He had protuberant, bright blue eyes, crimson cheeks and the abundant whiskers you see in the pictures of Prussian officers in the Franco-Prussian War. He was kindly, hospitable, and fundamentally decent, fond of his food and drink, rather given to childish boasting, and highly irascible, especially with his wife and family. He was a staunch Catholic, like the bulk of his fellow-townsmen and much interested in the politics of the Centre, the Catholic political party. Every night he would repair to his *Stammtisch* at a local hostelry where, with flushed cheeks and rising voice, he would argue mightily with men of his own age – a local doctor, a brother Apotheker, an hotel-keeper – pounding the table with his fist so that the beer mugs danced. At such agapes, I was interested to note, when I knew enough of the language to note anything, that these stout old buffers invariably spoke the local *pâtois* (more than half Dutch) among themselves.

A year or two ago I found myself seated close to just such a *Stammtisch* as this, in a small café at Düsseldorf. There were the same Rhineland types gathered about the board, with the difference that one or two wives were present, a thing unheard-of in my days at Cleves. But there were no political arguments, no raised voices, no table thumping: these placid bourgeois spoke in hushed voices and not politics but the humdrum occupations of their small circle, formed the sole theme of their talk.

The Nazi era!

The Franco-Prussian war, in which he had served as an ambulance assistant at Mainz, was the great event in my host's life. He had his war medal and two or three other somewhat obscure decorations conferred on him in connection with various international exhibitions and the like, with which he had been associated. These he never tired of displaying to visitors and he would wear them in an imposing, polychromatic bar pinned to the lapel of his frock-coat at the Kaiser's birthday dinner and similar solemn occasions, with an indescribable air. Tending the French wounded in the lazarette at Mainz, he had picked up a smattering of French and this, eked out by Latin, was our only means of communication for many weary weeks.

I suppose that an English schoolboy, brought up in a great city, was a more engaging companion for my host than a German *Sekundaner* who was being sedulously stamped to a pattern by the narrow-minded pedagogues of the local *Gymnasium*. The fact is that my host, much to my embarrassment, favoured me as company more than his eldest son, a boy of my own age. While Paul was at school or at home, battling with the colossal homework which was the portion of the German schoolboy, I was running round the town with his father, shopping, calling on business acquaintances, drinking beer at the *Stammtisch* or sharing a *Schoppen* of Moselle in Schmidt's wine-garden, where, of a summer evening, the garrison band would play.

I had two songs which a sister of mine had taught me to vamp out on the piano. One was that classic example of music-hall patriotism then much in vogue in London, 'Bravo, the Dublin Fusiliers!' The other a very dreadful imitation, which I thought exceedingly comic, of a street-singer warbling that pathetic ballad 'As Your Hair Grows Whiter I Will Love You More!' In a misguided moment I was persuaded – too easily persuaded – to display my prowess as an entertainer and thereafter, wherever there was a piano, I was forced to sit down and produce my two numbers. At my host's bidding I had to put on my act in and out of season. I performed before the officers

of the garrison, the members of the *Stammtisch*, at a convent, a monastery and at sundry private houses. Always my efforts were received with gales of laughter and thunderous applause by people who cannot have had the slightest inkling of what it was all about.

It puzzled me at the time; but I know the explanation now. I was a foreigner and therefore, interesting and even, one might say, something superior in the eyes of this people suffering then as now from the greatest inferiority complex on record.

There is a seed of thought there to account for German adulation of Adolf Hitler, the Austrian.

I was spoiled and petted by the older set at Cleves. I was even admitted to the tennis club where, if I remember rightly, I was the only male to appear in white flannels. The officers played in their military frock-coats, the civilians in shirt and trousers. In the annual tournament, partnering a charming young woman in a long white frock and picture hat, I won the mixed doubles: the men's doubles likewise fell to me and my partner: and after a heroic struggle against a local lawyer I carried off the men's singles and became 'Champion von Cleve'. We had a very jolly banquet after, at which the prizes were presented and my health was drunk in my championship cup in sweet German champagne. It was all very simple, and kindly, and very, very gay.

Save for a rare conversation with Pater Antonius, a stalwart Capuchin, bearded after the manner of the Order, who sometimes dropped in for a glass of my hostess's currant wine and who knew a little English, I spoke no word of my native tongue. My progress in German was, therefore, fairly rapid. As soon as I began to understand the language and to make myself understood in it, I went for lessons to a local *Volkschullehrer*, a painstaking and highly intelligent instructor, who taught me German, exactly as though I were a small child learning to read, with the aid of a *Fibel* or primer. Under his tuition I forged rapidly ahead and by the end of the year, at the prompting of this admirable fellow, I was translating into German leading articles from *The Times* and Mr. St. Loe Strachey's *Spectator*.

As the windows of my mind were thus slowly opened and I began to glean the gist of the conversations that went on around me, I made several interesting discoveries. I was aware that ragamuffins often shouted after me in the streets, but I realised I was a foreigner in Germany and my English upbringing saw nothing out of the way in the stranger within the gates being regarded as a figure of fun. As my German improved, however, I was able to fit words to the raucous cries that greeted me as I walked up the Hohe Strasse. '*Fieser Engländer!*' – *fies* was a local dialect word meaning 'dirty' or 'disreputable' – the kids would shout, or '*Hoch die Buren!*' or '*Buller*' (pronounced 'Böller') '*kaput!*' (Sir Redvers Buller was our singularly unsuccessful Commander-in-Chief in South Africa).

The school-fellows of the son of our house, with whom I was soon on friendly terms, were, one and all, with the sole exception of a Dutch boy – strangely enough, in view of the pro-Boer feeling in Holland – rabidly anti-English. This is not to say that they were discourteous to me, but they would bring me from the newspaper tidings of every British reverse in South Africa – and there were many at that time – with an air of ill-concealed delight, of positive gloating, which at first amazed and afterwards bitterly disillusioned me.

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Soon after I arrived at Cleves President Kruger and the Boer generals landed in Holland. They were on their way to seek the support of the Continental Powers in the fight against Britain. The long struggle of the Boer republics to retain their independence was at its last gasp, and in desperation the aged President of the Transvaal and his counsellors turned first to that monarch who, at the time of the Boers' repulse of the Jameson raiders in 1896, had spontaneously telegraphed his congratulations to Kruger on having restored peace and preserved the independence of his country 'without appealing to the help of friendly Powers'.

It is not surprising that the Boer leaders should have counted the German Emperor the enemy of England, and therefore disposed to espouse their cause, for such was the general interpretation placed by public opinion in England upon this, one

of the most disastrous of William II's innumerable blunders. While there was little sympathy with Dr. Jameson's ill-timed and badly-organised bid to wrest the power from the Boers, and less with Rhodes and Chamberlain who were suspected of having tacitly approved it, the Kaiser's mischievous interference was regarded as a deliberately unfriendly act, and his personal popularity never recovered from it.

I find a note in my diary, under date February 1, 1909, at which time I was Reuter's correspondent in Berlin: 'Everybody admits that the initiative in the matter of the Kruger telegram came from the Emperor. At the Foreign Office they said to me, "Surely you don't think we ran to His Majesty and said 'Now's the time for a telegram – fire it in!'" Von Roeder (Chamberlain to the Empress) tells me that the Kaiser, when he dispatched his message, had no idea that there were British army officers and "gentlemen" with Jameson – he thought it was just a gang of filibusterers. In January 1896, after the telegram had been sent, von Roeder went to Marschall von Bieberstein, then German Foreign Secretary, and said, "That telegram will never be forgiven or forgotten by the English!" Marschall replied, "Nonsense! They'll forget all about it in fourteen days!" "Not fourteen days, or fourteen months, or fourteen years," said von Roeder.'

Von Roeder, who had an English wife and knew England well, was right.

To return to the Boer generals – on their arrival in Holland it was announced that they would stop at Cologne, to await the reply to their appeal to William II. As is known, he declined to receive them. Cologne was only an hour or two by rail from Cleves and I resolved – I suppose it was the paternal journalistic instinct stirring in me – that I would journey to Cologne and take a look at the celebrated Oom Paul. I did not speak a syllable of German then, but that did not deter me and in due course I found myself in a crowd of many thousands delirious with excitement assembled below the balcony of the Dom Hotel, where the aged President, in a tall hat and black frock-coat, looking rather like an elderly baboon, stood with his followers.

Kruger seemed tired and old and disillusioned. The mob roared '*Hoch Kruger! Hoch die Buren!*' and '*Nieder mit den Engländern! Pfui, Kamberlain!*' in a highly alarming manner. But no one paid any attention to me, and I returned to Cleves without mishap.

In his notorious interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, published in 1908, which will be referred to again in the course of this narrative, the Emperor sought to make capital out of, without explaining, his refusal to receive the Boers. I was a newspaper man in Berlin when the interview appeared and the explosion of anger which greeted it taught me that, even with a people as docile as the German, tactlessness will outweigh any number of good intentions.

And William meant so well. He wanted to make friends with the English and by submitting the interview to the Foreign Office for approval before publication, did all that could have been expected of him – except to have kept his mouth shut, in the first place. But Prince Bülow failed him, the interview appeared uncensored, and the fat – or perhaps I should say, the butter – was in the fire.

For the butter was spread very thick – too thick. It was one of his dearest wishes, the monarch declared, to live on the best of terms with England, though the prevailing sentiment of the middle and lower classes of the German people was not friendly towards England. He had declined to receive the Boer delegates while other European peoples had received and fêted them: he had refused the invitation of France and Russia to join in calling upon England to put a stop to the South African war; and had further demonstrated his friendship for England by sending to Windsor a plan of campaign against the Boers drawn up by himself which ran on much the same lines as that eventually adopted by Lord Roberts.

One of William II's tours de force, at the time of the Boxer rising in China in 1900, when the murder of the German Minister in Peking, von Ketteler, shot down in the street by a mandarin in full robes, had painfully shocked the monarch, was to draw with his own hand a cartoon against the Yellow Peril. This he distributed lavishly among his fellow-sovereigns

and intimate friends – I have no doubt there is a copy somewhere at Windsor. The cartoon depicts a figure in flaming sword defeating a dragon inscribed 'Yellow Peril' and bears the legend 'Peoples of Europe, defend your holiest possessions!'

Writing in 1937, with the Japanese bombs raining down from the sky upon the International settlement at Shanghai, I find a prophetic note in the Kaiser's cartoon and also in the passages in which he reverts to the Yellow Peril in the *Daily Telegraph* interview. He declared that Germany required a powerful fleet 'in order to be prepared for any emergencies in the Far East' and that 'in view of the naval power of Japan and the possible national awakening of China', only those Powers that had navies would be listened to with respect when the future of the Pacific came to be solved. Even England herself, he added, might welcome the existence of a German fleet 'when they speak together on the same side in the great debates of the future'.

The Kaiser could not have been expected to foresee a German-Japanese military understanding under Nazi auspices; but it looks as if he might have been an even truer prophet than he knew in locating in the Pacific the real threat to world peace.

One was not surprised at the French being pro-Boer, I argued to myself, confronted by the Anglophobia of the Cleves Gymnasiasten, for we had trounced them at Waterloo and kicked them out of Fashoda, so naturally they would rejoice at England's discomfiture. But somehow one had expected to find the Germans different. They were a practical people, and all pro-Boers, it was well known, were cranks, like that ranting Lloyd George, who had to flee from the crowd at Birmingham disguised as a policeman. What upset me more, however, than the discovery that these German boys, with whom I drank beer and played football, were pro-Boer, was to find how rancorously they envied England's prosperity and power, and with what passion they longed to see proud Albion humbled to the dust.

It was not so surprising. Their professors at the Cleves *Gymnasium* were rabid pan-Germans who taught history and geography exclusively on pan-German lines, as was evident from my housemate Paul's text-books and note-books. On one occasion a lecturer from the Navy League came to the town and the whole of the Upper School at the *Gymnasium* were virtually ordered to attend. I went along, too. Rather unwisely, perhaps, for the greater part of the speaker's remarks were directed against Britain, the hereditary foe, whom the young German Empire found everywhere in its path. I felt self-conscious and rather miserable as the lecturer ranted and pounded the table and my neighbours looked at me and tittered: I did not know then that the Navy League was the principal instrument of von Tirpitz and the munition trusts for whooping up public support for the increased naval estimates which grew larger in every Budget.

I don't know whether public schoolboys in England to-day are taught anything about the loss of the American colonies. I was not. Under the influence of the flag-waving atmosphere in which boys of my generation were brought up, I believed that Britain had never lost a war and that the British Army, if not the largest, was the finest in the world. It infuriated me to hear these young Germans sneer at our soldiers in South Africa as 'mercenaries' and gutter-snipes, drunkards, plunderers and ravishers of women, who ran like hares before the gallant burghers and to whom no military virtue, not even that of courage, was to be conceded. I had heated arguments in my broken German, but superiority in numbers and superiority in German inevitably won.

That single battalion of a rather obscure line regiment at Cleves was a microcosm of the German army system. I found much interest in studying it. I had promised my father, in the interest of my health, to take a walk every afternoon. My steps usually directed me to the barrack square where the new batch of recruits were being licked into shape. I was fascinated by the dumb obedience of the men, loutish peasants in hideous canvas slops with round, peakless caps, and the formidable air of the N.C.O.s: I spent hours, a solitary observer, often in the

rain, watching the poor devils at P.T. (the famous '*Kniebeugen*' or 'On the Hands, Down!' which the Nazis employ for the purification of political principles at the prison camps), bayonet practice or arms drill. Several times I saw men struck, and once I heard a drill sergeant hurl at the head of an unusually awkward recruit an unprintable remark which I still regard as the *ne plus ultra* of obscene barrack-yard abuse.

It was not until I met some of the officers that I began to discern – dimly, as a youth of my age would – the causes of the nervous irritation which was thus vented on the young soldiers. The work of the Prussian Army was done in the main by the company commanders and the N.C.O.s. The former were responsible to the battalion commander, the latter to the company commander; and discipline was so pitiless that a company commander, whose company failed to come up to the battalion commander's standard, was inexorably passed over for promotion.

I have seen old captains with grizzled hair blanch and tremble under a reproof from the battalion commander. As for the occasions when the regimental commander came over from Wesel to inspect the battalion, the ceremony was discussed and prepared for in awe for weeks in advance. In regiments like the 56th Infantry no officer was likely to possess any means beyond his pay, eked out, in the case of the married ones, by the wife's dowry: all the lieutenants were in debt, hoping for a wealthy marriage. With the increasing cost of living in Germany, for an officer to be retired with the rank of captain, as would inevitably have happened if, past a certain age, he were passed over for promotion, signified economic disaster.

War brings advancement, and, looking backward, I have often thought that the financial uncertainty of the average German officer's situation, and the nervous irritability and rivalry it engendered, had not a little to do with the military party's drive towards the Crown Prince's '*frisch, fröhlicher Krieg*', which virtually forced the Supreme War Lord's hand in 1914.

The social discipline in the Army was no less drastic than the military. Officers might not marry without permission: they were not allowed to subscribe to Social Democratic or even Radical newspapers; or to frequent the society of Radical or Social Democratic politicians; and if they dined at a Jewish house they had to go in plain clothes. The whole structure of German society rested on the premise that the officer was socially pre-eminent; and this premise was upheld on occasion in startling fashion.

In Berlin, before the War, respectable women, unless accompanied by a male escort, were not supposed to appear on foot in the Friedrich-Strasse which, though one of the principal thoroughfares, swarmed with street walkers. Unaware of this, a young American girl of good family and impeccable reputation was walking along the Friedrich-Strasse one day when she was annoyed by the persistent attempts of a man to get into conversation with her.

Finally, as she would have done in the States, she appealed to a policeman, but her admirer was too quick for her. He was in plain clothes but, producing his card, he said to the policeman, 'I am Lieutenant So-and-so of such-and-such a regiment and this woman accosted me. I order you to arrest her.' The unfortunate young woman was taken to the police station where the charge was booked and after she had identified herself she was provisionally released. Next day, however, she was brought to court where the officer told his story and she hers. The Judge said that it was a case of one party's word against another but since the complainant was a Prussian officer, he was obviously speaking the truth and must be believed. However, as the accused was a foreigner, he was willing to believe that she had erred through ignorance of German ways, and she would be discharged with a caution. The girl appealed to the American Embassy for redress and the Embassy took the matter up, but without the slightest success.

I found the Prussian officers at Cleves fundamentally a very decent lot, well-mannered, keen on their job, filled with *esprit de corps* and solicitous of the welfare of their men. But I perceived that Britain and the British Army meant less than

nothing to them. France and Russia were in their eyes the hereditary foes; the average Prussian officer was not anti-English for the simple reason that, unlike my civilian schoolboy friends, the whole of his training at the Cadet Schools had been based on the possibility of war with France or Russia, and that of Britain he knew little and thought less. He regarded the British Army – rightly, by comparison with the size of the great continental armies – as a negligible factor, and would have unhesitatingly given it as his honest opinion that not Wellington but Blücher was the real victor of Waterloo.

In this connection, the strangest case on record of a palpably obvious mistranslation establishing itself as an historic phrase is surely the remark, originally attributed to the Kaiser in a letter to *The Times* during the War, from its Military Correspondent, the late Colonel Repington, about 'French's contemptible little army'.¹ The German as originally cited was '*French's verächtliche kleine Armee*'; but if it had read instead '*French's verächtlich kleine Armee*' – *verächtlich* being used adverbially, and not as an adjective – the meaning is 'French's contemptibly small army', a version which is much more in accordance with the ex-Emperor's considerable knowledge of the British Army and the actual facts of the case.

William II, British Field-Marshal and Colonel-in-Chief of the Royals, prided himself on being an expert on the British Army, its history and its uniforms; indeed, as the celebrated *Daily Telegraph* interview showed,² he regarded himself to some extent as Grandmother Victoria's military adviser. In alluding to 'French's contemptibly small army', he was merely voicing the opinion of the whole German Great General Staff and speaking no more than the truth, if French's six divisions are contrasted with the numbers which other belligerents had in the field. But in this instance history has galloped ahead of

¹ Next day the Kaiser issued his now famous message to the German Army: 'It is my Royal and Imperial command that you concentrate your energies for the immediate present upon one single purpose, and that is that you address all your skill and all the valour of my soldiers to exterminate first the treacherous English, and walk over General French's contemptible little Army.'

From *The Life of Field-Marshal Sir John French, First Earl of Ypres*, by his son, Major the Hon. Gerald French, D.S.O. (Cassell & Co.)

² See p. 71.

etymology and the Old Contemptibles of Mons have a secure place in history from which all the grammarians in the world cannot oust them.

My Prussian officer friends at Cleves knew nothing of the British Fleet nor had they any realisation of the growing menace to world peace of Germany's naval challenge to Britain. The young German Navy was ever the stepchild of the Prussian Army. In army slang it was known, in good-humoured derision, as '*die Sechssundsiebziger*', from the circumstance that the 76th Infantry Regiment was in garrison at Kiel. As the pet plaything of 'S.M.' (*Seine Majestät*), as the Supreme War Lord was invariably referred to in German service circles, it had to be tolerated, but the Army considered it an expensive luxury and it was resentfully felt that the vast sums of money it swallowed up might be employed to much greater advantage on land armaments in preparation for the inevitable war with the French and the Russians. In framing his Navy bills von Tirpitz had much more redoubtable opposition to contend with from the Army heads, solidly backed by their kinsmen in the Conservative Party in parliament, than even from the Social Democrats.

I do not pretend that these thoughts occurred to me as a boy of seventeen, listening to the officers as they gossiped under the limes at the Cleves Tennis Club or shyly drinking beer with the *Gymnasiasten*. But in retrospect I realise what an ineffaceable shock my insular self-satisfaction received during my German year. I saw the Germans, so akin to us in many ways, as different from us as any Oriental people. Their hypersensitiveness, their mandarin-like caste system and adherence to outward forms, their standardised mentality, produced an impression on my youthful mind which was to help me explain to my own satisfaction many seemingly inexplicable developments of the Teuton character in years to come.

One of the costliest of Mr. Lloyd George's many blunders in foreign policy was his free gift to the Germans, in the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty, of a professional army which, in the upshot, was to serve as the cadres for the German Army of to-day. The British Premier explained that the abolition of

compulsory service in Germany would inevitably lead to the abolition of conscription everywhere.

I confess I smiled when I heard of this naïve proposal. The Prussian Army was scrapped, or outwardly, and the whole German social fabric crumbled. But, if forms of government change, human beings do not. At the behest of her victorious Allied Powers Germany discarded her Emperor and her army, in other words, the wielder of absolute authority and an institution which responded to the deepest instincts of the German character by conferring influence, social rank and even economic security through the agency of a military system.

The Nazi régime in Germany is Kaiserism in its extreme form. In the person of Adolf Hitler the German people has its autocrat, the object of even greater admiration than that which the Teuton mass mind paid to William II, and in the Brown Army, at present in process of being absorbed into the 'Wehrmacht', an instrument which forces the whole nation into the military groove ruthlessly and more completely than the old Reichsheer.

The continuity of history! History goes on and repeats itself. The difficulty is to discern when the wheel begins to turn backward.

CHAPTER VI

REUTER'S

I NEVER knew the first Baron de Reuter – 'the old Baron', as my father always called him; but his son, Baron Herbert, who succeeded him at the head of the agency, was one of the most extraordinary personalities I ever met. On my joining the agency in January 1902, on my return from Germany, naturally the Managing Director remained Olympically inaccessible to me as the humblest of juniors, and I did not have my first interview with him until, nearly three years later, I was appointed Reuter's Berlin correspondent. Baron Herbert liked the Reuter men abroad to write to him regularly about politics, never failing to reply in letters of admirable concision and Chesterfieldian elegance. Whenever I came home on leave my first call, naturally, was on my Chief, on which invariably followed an invitation to lunch so that, over a period of five years, I came to know him pretty well.

Or rather I should say, I became aware of the baffling character of this most unusual man. For I doubt whether anybody ever knew, in the full meaning of the term, Herbert de Reuter, who, while taking an active part in the direction of the world's greatest news bureau, lived the life of a recluse. In appearance he was small and slight with a small dark moustache and weak eyes. Although both his parents were Jewish, his features were not markedly Semitic – he had, however, a distinctly foreign air, German, more than anything else: he suggested a German lawyer or doctor.

When he spoke, however, it was with almost an exaggeration of the throaty lisp which humorists represent as characteristic of the Jewish articulation. I can close my eyes and hear him exclaim, 'My dear Thir!' in that hard, metallic voice of his.

He had some skin affection which caused him to finger perpetually his face and hands: he was enormously verbose, talking swiftly, jerkily, blinking continually – a nervous trick of his – through his glasses and punctuating his sentences by a long drawn-out sniff. When I say that he was verbose, I do not mean that he was a rattlepate. The man was a prodigious reader, with a store of knowledge so vast that he could express himself at length on any topic a visitor might chance to introduce – the words poured from him in a flood. His culture was all-embracing, his judgments, notably on politics and especially on my particular subject, German politics, amazingly shrewd. He had travelled in his youth but in the days when I knew him he rarely left England, but through the world-wide net of Reuter correspondents, reinforced by his own insatiable thirst for knowledge, had his finger on every pulse and could discourse intelligently on the political situation anywhere. The only person I ever encountered to equal him for erudition is J. L. Garvin.

He lived in a big house at Palace Gate and his life ran strictly to plan. Every morning, dressed in heavy clothes, irrespective of the weather, he mounted his bicycle and pedalled furiously for two hours round Battersea Park, arrived at Old Jewry at 11 a.m., and lunched, always at the City Liberal Club, in Walbrook, around half-past two or three. His lunch was invariably the same: a grilled sole, half a dozen bananas and anything from three to six large cups of strong black coffee with a cigar. Afterwards, he would return to the office where he would often stay until nine or ten o'clock, long after the day staff had gone and the evening shift came on.

He never went into society and even his immediate subordinates knew nothing of his home life. His recreation was higher mathematics: he spent the whole of his leisure working out the most advanced problems and booksellers in London and all over the Continent had standing orders to send him any new book published on the subject. At his death, I understand, whole crates of books and pamphlets on mathematics were found unopened at his house. How the Einstein theory would have electrified him, had he lived so long! I can

imagine the boyish zest with which he would have explained it to his young Berlin correspondent in those enormously protracted conversations – lasting sometimes for more than three hours – we used to have together in the old-fashioned board-room at Old Jewry.

He had the profoundest distrust of German diplomacy. Not that he was in any sense a traitor to the blood that flowed in his veins on both sides, thoroughly English though his outlook was. On the contrary he frequently contrasted the superior education of the German people with the mediocre education of the British, particularly at our public schools. But he saw with a prophetic eye the result of enslaving a nation in the service of a military machine: he discerned in the Kaiser's and the German Chancellor's protestations of friendship for this country the head of the wedge intended to split our entente with France. '*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*,' he wrote characteristically in one of his letters to me in Berlin. It was the counsel he never tired of instilling.

To me, the son of one of his father's oldest collaborators – my father resigned the Chief Editorship through ill-health soon after I was engaged – he was always extraordinarily kind. I shudder sometimes at the risk he took in entrusting me, a callow youth of twenty-one, with the important post of Berlin correspondent, especially as the successor of that brilliant creature, the late Austin Harrison. He was generous in his praise and the more practical recognition, in the shape of salary increases, of such work as I accomplished for the agency and when I left to accept Lord Northcliffe's invitation to become *Daily Mail* correspondent in Paris, we parted with regrets which, on my side, at least, were sincere.

I was in fairly constant contact with him over a period of five years, yet without ever having the sensation of drawing any closer to him. He seemed to me all brain, a thinking machine, one who lived his life on a plane as remote from that of ordinary mortals as the abstruse mathematical problems which were his enduring delight, who, asking no sympathy, repelled it. He was an agnostic and, as far as the future life goes, a materialist: his science refused to let him believe that

anything can survive, once the brain has ceased to function. I should have said that of all men he, through long years of quiet study and meditation, had steeled himself against those emotional disturbances which drive human beings to despair. Yet he was destined to die by his own hand over the dead body of his wife.

Baroness de Reuter, an English lady, had been an invalid for years. When ultimately, in the early part of 1915, in the second year of the War, she died it seemed as though life had nothing further to offer this lonely figure, and he shot himself beside her as she lay dead.

The tragedy came as an immense shock and surprise to me. I had grown to regard Baron de Reuter as immune from ordinary human sentiments. He did not get on with his only son, Hubert de Reuter, a gifted but erratic young man who was working in the Editorial Department with me when I was there. They drifted apart and once in Paris, after I had left Reuter's, when I chanced to run into Hubert who was living there, I wondered whether I should not take the initiative of trying to bring them together again. But it was plainly indicated to me that my interference would not be welcomed and I let the matter rest. Hubert de Reuter succeeded to the title. He was killed as a private in the Black Watch on the Somme.

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Reuter's editorial department was a fine training for journalism. Our job was to edit for the newspapers the messages coming in from abroad, many of which arrived in French or German, but also to dispatch the different services of news to the allied agencies and our subscribers throughout the world. Without going into details of the vast and intricate network which Reuter's had built up, I might mention that the Agency supplied the principal news service for India, South Africa, Australia and the rest of the Empire, except Canada, as well as for the Continent, through the great national news agencies like the French Agence Havas or the German Wolff Telegraphen Bureau. It was also the principal source of non-American news for the United States through the Associated

Press of America. In the course of the years since Paul Julius Reuter first started in business, the globe had become divided up between Reuter's and the leading foreign agencies for the purposes of news exploitation, each agency enjoying, *vis-à-vis* the other, the monopoly of news gathering and distributing in its own territory. Britain, the British Empire, and its dependencies and North America was Reuter's sphere; France, Southern Europe and South America belonged to the Agence Havas; Germany and, through the Vienna Korrespondenz-Bureau, Austria-Hungary and the Balkans, was Wolff's territory.

Ability to read and write French and German was exacted from all prospective candidates for Reuter's editorial department. The work was largely routine, so newspaper experience was not insisted upon. But sub-editors had to possess a good general education and above all things, a fund of general knowledge adequate to grapple with the innumerable subjects which came under their pencils every day.

The Editorial Room never closed. There were four shifts, day, evening, night and early morning. Standards were high. We had an adjective expression of the tone of the service as a whole – 'reuterian'. Sensationalism, slang, news from a doubtful source – these were 'not reuterian'. Accuracy in all things was insisted upon, and while translations might be literary, they had always to be faithful. Sloppy or even colloquial English was frowned on – I once received a mild reprimand from the Baron because the term 'a blazing indiscretion', which I applied to the *Hohenlohe Memoirs*, got past the editor-in-charge into print in one of my messages from Berlin.

The three years I spent in Reuter's Editorial Room were a liberal education to me. We sub-editors were a motley crew, mustering perhaps a dozen languages between us. I was a raw youth with everything to learn but among my colleagues the level of culture was extraordinarily high. The work was distributed as it arrived and between messages, over pots of beer which a messenger would fetch from the pub next door, every imaginable subject would be discussed with authority and real knowledge, from Weininger's *Abirrungen der Liebe* to the influence of ancient Egypt upon Mayan civilisation.

It was rather thrilling to sit at night, in the quiet of the City of London, in that old room which had probably been the nursery when No. 24 was a City merchant's dwelling-house, where in winter a great fire blazed in the open grate, and see the news filter in from every corner of the globe. What excitement when a big story 'broke' and the preliminary flash was rushed upstairs to the operator to circulate via the Reuter ticker which stood in every newspaper office. While Fleet Street was being served, the news was already winging its way to the four corners of the earth. Sometimes there would be a hitch as on the celebrated occasion when a brief New York cable was handed to a recently-joined sub-editor. After a perfunctory glance at it, he thrust it under the bell on his desk, the customary repository of all messages of no apparent urgency.

'These Yanks!' he exclaimed. 'They seem to think we're interested in their blooming President's shooting excursions!' 'How do you mean?' someone inquired idly. 'Why,' said the youth, picking up the cable again, 'New York appears to imagine it's worth fivepence a word to tell us that McKinley's shot a buffalo!' 'What's that?' remarked the editor-in-charge who happened to be passing. Then with a bellow he snatched the cable from the editor's hand. It read 'McKinley shot Buffalo' – it was the first news of the American President's assassination.

By the time Mr. Dickinson, my father's successor as Chief Editor, had finished with that young man, I have no doubt he was fully aware that the buffalo no longer roams the American prairie.

The night shift came on at 11 p.m. and left at 5 a.m. Because I liked having my days free I did night work – never very popular – for months on end, keeping myself awake by draughts of strong tea laced with whisky. For the convenience of the night editors who could not get home at five in the morning, four bedrooms stood at their disposal. Since the seventies, when Reuter's moved to Old Jewry, generations of editors had used these gloomy bedrooms, black with the city grime. My father had slept there and he used to tell how, on

retiring one night, he found under the bed, placed flat on the spot where an indispensable vessel should have found itself, the following delicate communication from the charwoman, scrawled on a sheet of editorial scribbling paper, 'Dear sir. Excuse me which I have broke it. I will replace. Yrs. respectfully, Miss Silk.'

When I was first shown into one of the Reuter bedrooms I was horrified. Linen and towels were clean, but most of the furniture was in a damaged condition, the blinds were torn, the blind cords encrusted with dirt. Nobody seemed to mind: 'it had always been like that'. I was nineteen and full of crusading zeal. I sat down and wrote a stern protest to Mr. Bradshaw, the portly and amiable secretary. Almost for the first time, I imagine, since the bedrooms had been put into use, somebody in authority came upstairs and inspected them. I received a formal letter of thanks and the bedrooms were forthwith repainted, repapered, refurnished.

It was a valuable lesson to me. It taught me that in life nine out of ten people are too conservative or too lacking in spirit to rise up against patent abuses.

Often, when a special report was needed, I would be sent to official banquets, which duty carried with it a special fee of half a guinea. I have covered as many as four such functions in a week, and, as it was still the age of public gluttony, especially where City dinners were concerned, there were occasions when I felt I could not look turtle soup, ortolans or pâté de fois gras in the face, and dined modestly off a spoonful of caviar and a glass of champagne. What gigantic menus they had in those days and what a bewildering array of wines! At one of the Livery Companies – I forget which – they used to serve a Château Mouton Rothschild 1876 which had to be tasted to be believed.

My salary was very small and I eked it out, as I was so much on night duty, by doing a job of reporting from time to time on the *Daily Mirror*, then lately converted by Alfred Harmsworth (the future Lord Northcliffe) from a disastrous 'flop' as a journal edited by women for women into a resounding success as the first daily picture paper – the original *Daily*

Graphic was illustrated by drawings, not photographs. Hamilton Fyfe, who had been secretary to the Editor of *The Times* was editor and 'Skipper' Williams, who for many years past has been chief ship news reporter of the *New York Times*, was the star reporter.

I filled all kinds of odd, and rather unimportant, assignments. I interviewed poor Dan Leno when he was quite mad in his dressing-room at the old London Pavilion, and I made thirty shillings (at 2d. a line, space rates), which was quite a respectable sum for me, out of a story which Gertie Millar, then at the height of her fame at the Gaiety Theatre, told me. I repeat it merely to show how relations between stage and society have changed since those days.

I called on Gertie Millar at the theatre one evening with some trivial inquiry. The beautiful Marie Studholme and one or two other ladies of the company were with her in her dressing-room, and they were all seething with indignation. That day they had gone to help at a fashionable charity bazaar at the Albert Hall organised by some titled women. When the lunch-hour arrived each of the actresses was handed an envelope containing 10d. in cash (why 10d.?) for their lunch while the organisers retired to a private room where a special meal was in waiting. Nowadays when so many peeresses have graduated from the stage and so many peeresses are earning their own living, it is hard to say where the stage ends and society begins.

The Gertie Millar of those days is now Lady Dudley. I did not meet her again until a few years ago when I was introduced to her at a cocktail party at Isaac Marcossou's in New York. I had brought with me to the party a young Englishman, a friend of my nephew's at Oxford, and I introduced him to Lady Dudley, adding, for his benefit, 'Better known as Miss Gertie Millar.' 'I bet he's never heard of Gertie Millar,' exclaimed Lady Dudley with charming frankness. With no less candour the youth admitted she was right. She turned to me with a wistful smile. 'There you are,' she said. 'But who'd have thought it possible twenty years ago?'

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We had some rare Bohemians at Reuter's. One was dear, gay, witty Guy Beringer who, in a period of financial stress, had himself permanently transferred to early morning duty and conveyed his goods and chattels to one of the Reuter bedrooms, thereby saving rent. He was generally supposed to exercise a considerable part of his editorial functions in the dawn from his bed. As funds were short, he purchased at an auction at the London docks a large barrel of slightly damaged anchovies, on which he lived for several weeks. He used to say they made the beer taste better.

Happy days! The work was interesting and if salaries were not high, they paid our income tax and it was a life job if you wanted it – nobody ever seemed to be fired. At Reuter's I first learned not to split my infinitives, to write 'begin' instead of 'commence', and to eschew the more facile *clichés* of our craft. I obtained a pretty wide knowledge of the politics and constitution of most foreign governments: I could creditably pass an examination as to the occupations and relative importance of most famous people in the world; I knew the name of the Bolivian capital and the French for the Falkland Islands. But, most important of all, I learned the virtues of accuracy and concision – such tasks as that of compressing a *Times* leader into a telegram of fifty words – in German, at that – or packing the gist of a three-hour Budget speech into a 200-word cable were a magnificent discipline in these respects.

At the ripe age of twenty-one I felt equal to tackling anything, even the not unformidable task of representing Reuter's in Berlin in one of the worst periods of Anglo-German relations.

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CHAPTER VII

INTRODUCTION TO DIPLOMACY

UNDER the heading Vienna, May 2, 1913, I find the following note in my diary:

'Called on Sir Maurice de Bunsen (British Ambassador). He is just off to London for the sittings of the Civil Service Commission for the reorganisation of the Diplomatic Service. He said to me, "For the Diplomatic Service, a man must have distinction and a certain position in order to be able to talk to a Foreign Minister as an equal over a glass of claret and a cigarette. The French have done themselves incalculable harm by the way they have let things slide in this respect."'

It was in Berlin, in the year 1904, that I made my first contacts with our pre-War diplomacy. At that time the Foreign Office was like the Brigade of Guards of the same period, a restricted coterie of people belonging approximately to the same social world, with strong traditions and jealously guarded privileges. Before the War Guards officers were not allowed to travel by bus, even in plain clothes, and 'London clothes', i.e. morning-coat and top-hat, were supposed to be worn in Mayfair in the daytime (since the War, I have heard, the Major-General commanding the London District has had to issue orders restraining the propensity of young officers to appear in London in flannel bags).

I cannot say to what extent our budding diplomatists were similarly controlled in their private lives but, in addition to private means adequate to maintain it, a certain standard of social standing and behaviour was insisted upon. If the Eton-and-Oxford background was not specifically exacted from can-

didates for the Diplomatic, the fact is that the majority of our diplomatists were of the social stamp which the phrase implies. Of course, the entrance examination was competitive, but a selective system saw to it that brains alone, devoid of social graces, did not suffice for a diplomatic career. Moreover, to put it as impartially as possible, birth and aristocratic connections were no hindrance: indeed, there were certain great families like the Villiers who enjoyed an almost prescriptive right to the plums of the service. In my young days there was a Private Secretary at the Foreign Office, whose duty it was to allot posts abroad to the Foreign Office young men. His method, I believe, was to select candidates by their foot-wear: when postulants presented themselves before him, his glance would drop unerringly to their feet. The youth who appeared expensively shod by Lobb or Thomas would be posted to Paris, or St. Petersburg, or Rome: the hobbledehoy in brogues got Bogotá.

Of course, at the period of which I write, our representatives abroad were dealing for the most part with diplomatists recruited on identical lines. The French and Americans were the exceptions, although I do not know that the French had any the worse Ambassadors for that. From the social standpoint, they produced some funnies, it is true: for instance, when I first went to Berlin, the French Ambassador was a certain Monsieur Bihourd, who was so excessively bourgeois in appearance and of so frugal a habit, that his nickname in the Diplomatic Body was '*l'Épicier*' – the Grocer.

The Americans, of course, possessed no diplomatic uniform, as is still the case, and normally attended Court functions, as they do to-day, in evening dress. The result was that Uncle Sam's representative, a lonely figure in sober black amid a perfect coruscation of glittering uniforms, was not infrequently mistaken for a waiter. There were other penalties. Charlemagne Tower, who was American Ambassador to Germany when I arrived in Berlin, had formerly been American Ambassador to Russia. In this capacity he was once compelled to attend the launching of a battleship by the Tsar, in a bitter wind, wearing only evening dress without an overcoat and

caught a heavy cold in consequence. As a result of this experience, he designed a handsome diplomatic uniform for himself and his secretaries, with gold lace, oak-leaves and all, and a plumed hat with white feathers for His Excellency and black for his aides. American men are extremely self-conscious about dressing up and one can imagine the feelings with which men like 'Joe' Grew and Nelson O'Shaugnessy donned this slightly grotesque travesty for the purpose of going to the Kaiser's Court.

Nelson O'Shaugnessy is dead now, but I met his son in New York last year and he told me that his mother had recently disinterred from an old trunk the gaudy habiliments of his father's diplomatic days.

Charlemagne Tower, who was a rich man, maintained at his own expense a magnificent Embassy at the Pourtales Palace on the Königs-Platz in Berlin. The high-water-mark of his Berlin Ambassadorship was a famous fancy dress ball he gave at the American Embassy. The Emperor was present and described the affair as 'the most beautiful ball I have ever seen'. Two secretaries from the British Embassy, Walford Selby and Archibald Clark Kerr, both Ambassadors now, created quite a sensation by appearing in kilts, Guards officers who were present asking permission to finger their knees, to see if they were really bare. The great moment of the evening, however, was provided by the entry, at the height of the ball, of an old Berlin cabby, with drink-inflamed face, white glazed top-hat and coat of many capes, who came rushing up the broad staircase, cracking his whip and pursued by horrified flunkies. It proved to be the Princess of Wied who, having had her joke, retired and reappeared in a beautiful Watteau shepherdess costume.

William II liked the ambassadors accredited to him from foreign Powers to be men of social standing and wealth; he felt that such lavish entertainments as Charlemagne Tower gave helped to enhance the brilliance of the Court, and, incidentally, the monarch's lustre as well. When Tower resigned for reasons of health in 1908, the Emperor was much displeased to learn that Dr. David Jayne Hill, an eminent college professor

and historian, had been designated as Tower's successor. Dr. Hill, who was a man of limited means and not a millionaire like Tower, was not at all His Majesty's idea of what an ambassador should be. William declared to anyone who would listen to him that Hill was quite unsuitable, '*ein ganz kleiner Mann*', and endeavoured to persuade Tower to withdraw his resignation. When this proved unsuccessful, the monarch tried to have Griscom, the United States Minister to Italy, who more nearly came up to the Imperial specification of ambassadorial suitability, transferred to Berlin. But the State Department stood firm and as there was really no valid objection to be made against Hill, he duly assumed the post and acquitted himself, in difficult circumstances, with great dignity.

The new Ambassadress proved to be rather a problem. Since I have grown to know more of the United States, I imagine she was no more than the average American college professor's wife who naturally felt somewhat strange in the unfamiliar surroundings of a European Court. But the diplomatic world of Berlin found her quite a character. She liked to speak French, sometimes with odd results. The story went that the German Empress asked her one day whether, like so many American girls, her daughter proposed to follow a career. '*Mais oui, Majesté*,' Mrs. Hill replied promptly. '*Ma fille veut se faire nourrice!*' By which Her Excellency wished to intimate that her daughter intended to take up nursing as a profession, to become a nurse (*infirmière*); what she actually said was that the young lady meant to be a wet nurse, a remark which, while it surprised, probably did not greatly astonish the Empress, because in those days Americans were considered capable of the most marked eccentricities.

Sir Frank Lascelles was British Ambassador when I first went to Berlin. He was a dignified, urbane and rather indolent old gentleman with a white beard who derived a good deal of satisfaction, I fancy, from the fact that he was the uncle of the Duke of Devonshire (the present Duke). Lady Edward Cavendish, the duke's mother, was Sir Frank's sister and kept house for him as he was a widower. She was a placid Victorian

matron full of good works, and was commonly referred to by irreverent Guards subalterns as Lady Edward '*Kaffeetisch*' – (coffee table). In the course of a long diplomatic career Sir Frank had discovered that diplomatists who come to grief usually do so through excessive zeal and that, as a general rule, inaction pays better than action. His practice was to lie in bed until noon when he had his breakfast, after which he rose and immediately lunched, a curious dietary plan which appeared to agree with him for, despite his advanced age, he was extraordinarily robust.

He was extremely shrewd and, on taking over the Berlin Embassy, had clearly arrived at the conclusion that the Emperor was the most important personage on the immediate political horizon and that, while Chancellors came and went, 'S.M.' remained. He therefore cultivated William II who, quick to perceive the slightly snobbish strain in His British Majesty's Ambassador, flattered him in various small ways and I feel sure, whenever there was a movement at home in favour of a stronger British representative in Berlin, was instrumental in preventing any change.

Sir Frank's favourite story was of how the Kaiser surprised him one morning in bed. I cannot do better than quote the dispatch which the Ambassador addressed to the Foreign Office on the subject, as he repeated it to me:

'At a quarter past seven this morning I was awakened by a steady pressure on my right hand which was outside the bed clothes. On opening my eyes I was astonished to find the Emperor regarding me with an expression of keen amusement which gave place to a peal of laughter when he heard the expression "God bless me!" I essayed to rise but the Emperor pushed me back into bed. "At least Your Majesty will allow me to give you a cigarette," I said. The Emperor took one and sat there on the edge of the bed talking for half an hour.'

At the end of the interview, which concerned the forthcoming Kiel Regatta, Sir Frank insisted on seeing His Imperial visitor at least as far as the bedroom door and in fact, escorted

William II to the head of the stairs. As the Emperor caught sight of his adjutant waiting in the hall below he called to him, '*Jetzt gibt's eine Erscheinung!*' (Here's a sight) and added chuckling to the officer, 'I bet you never saw an Ambassador in his pyjamas before!'

A not unimportant part of Sir Frank's duties consisted in smoothing out the tiffs which continually recurred between the Emperor and his royal uncle, Edward VII, a task for which his natural good manners and poise of a grand seigneur rendered him unusually fitted. It was an open secret that no love was lost between the two monarchs. The King had never forgotten his nephew's treatment of the Empress Frederick, the Emperor's mother and the King's well-beloved eldest sister, and did not try to conceal the fact that he regarded the younger man as an unmitigated bounder while, on his side, William II screened a certain almost unconscious envy of King Edward's fame as a man of the world beneath a mask of affected indignation at 'Uncle Bertie's carryings-on'.

When it is remembered that the Scandinavian capitals and St. Petersburg and the small German courts, each with its quota of kinsfolk of the British and Prussian Royal families, were all sounding-boards for tittle-tattle about the two monarchs, it will be understood how easily and how steadily the fires of ill-will between them were nourished. Particularly between London and Berlin, certain highly-connected tale-bearers were indefatigably active: it was appreciated that King Edward was not averse from hearing of Wilhelm's latest *gaffe* while the Emperor was always ready to lend a willing ear to malicious gossip concerning his uncle's private life.

In continually composing the recurrent squabbles between the two sovereigns which, in view of the Emperor's autocratic powers, were not without effect upon the political relations between the two countries, I think that Sir Frank Lascelles justified his long tenure of the Berlin post. He could stand up to William II at need. He was warned that, at his first audience, the Emperor was likely to bring up the question of the Kruger telegram.¹ In fact, the Kaiser told Sir Frank that he

¹ See pp. 69, 70.

had received numerous marks of approbation for his action from English people including 'several duchesses and society ladies'. 'Would Your Majesty name some?' the Ambassador begged in his blandest tone. 'Lady Cardigan, for one,' replied the monarch. 'Well, Sire,' declared Sir Frank bluntly, 'I have been moving about in London Society for a good many years and I never even heard of the lady!'

It was the same Lady Cardigan who subsequently wrote a book, of memoirs which mightily scandalised the pre-War generation of London Society.

The Foreign Office possessed an unusually competent observer in the suave, witty and extremely clear-sighted diplomatist who was Counsellor of Embassy under Sir Frank Lascelles during the greater part of my period in Berlin. Count de Salis is head of the English branch of an ancient family – in the Scottish Highlands it would be called a clan – which, originating in the once independent Canton of Grisons in what is now Switzerland, has ramifications extending all over Europe and has given men eminent in peace and war to the service of more than one State. The English branch was founded by Jerome de Salis who settled in England in 1730, was naturalised and married the daughter of Viscount Fane. Jerome's father was made Count of the Holy Roman Empire by the Emperor Francis II of Austria in 1784 for services rendered at the Peace of Utrecht and by patent granted in 1809, all Jerome's descendants, after Continental custom, were permitted to use the title in England.

I fancy that the German Foreign Office was always rather baffled by Count de Salis. Typically British in all respects (he was at Eton and Oxford) he nevertheless possessed the most disconcerting insight into the Continental mind, related as he was by birth and marriage to some of the greatest families of Europe – he married the daughter of Prince Eugène de Caraman Chimay who died in 1902 so that he was brother-in-law to Count Szechenyi, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in Berlin, who was married to the Countess de Salis's sister. One can understand the German caste mind feeling that a man of these connections – one of the Austrian branch of the de Salis

clan was a Field-Marshal (General Feldzeugmeister) who was Governor of Belgrade during the World War—should be a Continental diplomatist—instead they found a pleasant-mannered but extremely wideawake Englishman, who unerringly followed every move in the German game. Particularly was he aware of the Russian danger, of the menace to European peace involved in Germany's countenancing, if not actively encouraging, her Habsburg ally's forward policy in the Balkans, which was bound to lead to a breach with Russia in the end; but his warnings to the Foreign Office fell on deaf ears.

Count de Salis, as he would be the first to acknowledge, received many lessons in practical diplomacy from Lord Cromer, under whom he served in Egypt for a number of years before being transferred to Berlin—he was also a large landowner in the South of Ireland which in itself is a liberal education in the nice calculation of human values. From Berlin he went to Montenegro and as British Minister at Cetinje during the Balkan War of 1912 saw much of that rather *opéra bouffe* type, the doughty King Nicholas of Montenegro—to this day his health suffers from the effects of the bad food and insanitary conditions of the Cetinje post. Later he became British Minister to the Holy See where, especially during the World War, his perspicuous sincerity, his shrewd common sense and his understanding of the difficulties confronting the Vatican, based on a long and intimate acquaintance with the Papacy and its problems, were invaluable in taking care of British interests.

Count de Salis has a quick and pretty wit. On his marriage he became a Catholic and the spectacle of this Englishman with a foreign title and name, who was a Roman Catholic and at the same time British Envoy to the Vatican, appeared to intrigue the late Lord Birkenhead, then Lord Chancellor, on one occasion when they chanced to meet for the first time at a luncheon party during the War. 'I've heard,' said 'F.E.' to de Salis, 'that the Pope was quite a sportsman in his youth. What would you say if he suddenly tucked up his cassock, jumped on a horse and went out hunting with the Rome pack?'

De Salis smiled his slightly deprecatory smile and replied blandly, 'I suppose one would say that the Church had gone to the dogs!'

This turned the laugh against the Lord Chancellor who, undaunted, returned to the charge. 'And what would happen if the Pope went mad?' he questioned again.

His butt remained unruffled. 'What would happen if the Lord Chancellor went mad?' he countered swiftly, a subtle allusion to the unchallengeability of Pontiff and Lord Chancellor while holding their respective offices which did not escape 'F.E.'s' razor-sharp intelligence, and he asked no more questions.

When Sir Frank Lascelles ultimately retired, the Emperor marked his friendship for him by the bestowal of the Order of the Black Eagle, the highest Prussian decoration. I shall always feel under a debt of gratitude to Sir Frank if only because it was he who first directed my attention to real tennis, which he had played regularly in his younger days. 'It's a magnificent game for developing the mind,' he told me. 'If you would understand anything about diplomacy, play tennis!' Some years later, finding myself making a long stay in Vienna, where there was at that time a real tennis court (Ballhaus) in the Auersperg Palace, I followed Sir Frank's advice and under the direction of Hugo Frazier, then at the American Embassy, took up the game and have played it, or at it, ever since.

Oddly enough, I once managed to creep into the annals of the game. It was in the year 1922 and I was playing a four-some on Mr. A. B. Horne's court at Ditton Place, near Balcombe, in Sussex. My wife and I were playing against C. T. Graves, the assistant editor of *Punch*, and Roger Wright, late of the Grenadier Guards, who was wounded the same day as I was on the Somme. Suddenly our host, who was marking the game, stopped us in a state of great excitement. 'You have just played the coup de Cabasse!' he informed me.

I was only aware that I had boosted a ball back-handed off the main wall from the hazard side and diagonally across the court on to the joute, as the wall between the penthouse and the

dedans is called, and so into the dedans. But A. B. Horne, who is a walking history of this ancient and delightful game, explained that this was the favourite stroke of Cabasse, marker to Louis XVI at the tennis court at Versailles (scene of the famous 'Tennis Court Oath' at the outset of the French Revolution) and that it had not been performed on an English court since, I think, the early nineteenth century. My *coup de Cabasse* got into the *Field* and thence into the monumental *History of Tennis* by the late E. B. Noel and G. O. M. Clark. I have since spent my time in trying to persuade my friends in the tennis world to believe that it was deliberate. A. B. Horne, whom theatre audiences know better under his play-producing pseudonym of 'Anmer Hall', calls me 'Cabasse' to this day. The Ditton Place court is somewhat smaller than ordinary—I am told that the 'coup de Cabasse' is impossible in a court of regulation size.

Sir Frank Lascelles's success in averting an open breach between uncle and nephew was publicly demonstrated when in the year 1909 King Edward and Queen Alexandra paid a State visit to Berlin. A notable point about the visit was that the English Queen accompanied her husband. Since the dragooning of Denmark and the rape of the provinces of Schleswig and Holstein by Bismarck in 1864, 'the Sea King's daughter' had resolutely refused to visit the capital of the German Empire. Moreover, she shared to the full her royal spouse's feelings towards his nephew.

I once saw Queen Alexandra inflict an open snub on the Kaiser. It was at the funeral of her father, Christian IX of Denmark, at the Danish royal burying-place of Røskilde in 1906. In the normal way King Edward, as principal son-in-law of the 'grandfather of Europe', would have attended the funeral. But scarcely was the breath out of King Christian's body than William II, a relative of some kind, as nearly every European royalty was at that time, but not nearly so closely connected as King Edward, popped in a wire to announce that he would come to Copenhagen for the obsequies.

The King and his nephew were just then passing through one of their periods of coolness. King Edward immediately

realised that the Emperor planned to make the funeral the pretext for a grand reconciliation, if not for an Anglo-German love-feast calculated to upset the French – the Entente Cordiale was still new. He promptly let it be known that he would be unable to attend the funeral. The Danes were greatly affronted. I had been sent from Berlin to represent Reuter's at the function and the first person I called upon was the Danish Foreign Minister.

I found him in a towering rage. He was a great deal less than complimentary to me about my sovereign and I left him, wondering whether I had secured a great journalistic 'scoop' or whether I could in fact publish any of his remarks. The matter was promptly settled for me. Hardly had I returned to my hotel when I was rung up by His Excellency himself. In a highly agitated state he begged me to consider our interview as absolutely private and to give him my assurance that I would make no use of it. This assurance I gave him the more light-heartedly inasmuch as by then I had realised that no British newspaper would publish such strictures on the monarch.

At Röskilde, when the royal bier was being carried to the crypt and the cortège of royal relations was forming up to follow it, the Kaiser sprang forward and offered Queen Alexandra his arm. She deliberately turned her back on him and took instead the arm of her brother-in-law, the Duke of Cumberland. The rebuff was the more stinging in that at that time the Cumberlands were scarcely on speaking terms with the Hohenzollerns, for the Duke was the rightful heir to the Kingdom of Hanover, annexed by Prussia after the war of 1866, and had never recognised the annexation. But, as the French say, *'Il ne faut jamais dire "Fontaine! Je ne boirai pas de ton eau!"'* – in other words, 'never' is a tricky word. The Duke of Cumberland's son and heir ultimately married the Kaiser's only daughter.

There was great satisfaction at the Berlin Court when it was announced that the Queen would accompany King Edward to Berlin. The German Foreign Office sent for me and gave me an advance copy of the speech which the Emperor was to

deliver at the State banquet. They drew my special attention to the following passage:

‘The Empress and I are most particularly pleased that Her Majesty, our dear Aunt, heightens the brilliance of these festive days by the charm of her winning and amiable presence. We are specially grateful to her that she has not shrunk from the northern winter journey to afford us by her coming to Berlin a proof of her feeling of kinmanship.’

A proof, not another, or a fresh proof, as the convention of such toasts would have phrased it, but a proof—in so many words, the first—of her feeling of kinmanship. It was not enough that a gracious lady, no longer young, was prepared to sacrifice to considerations of State her deepest and most sacred feelings of resentment against the violators of her little country—Nephew Wilhelm had to rub it in. There were many moments, in the years I spent in Germany, when Prussian tactlessness flicked me on the raw. This was one.

I was allowed to inspect the suite of apartments prepared for the Royal couple in the Berlin Schloss. As a general rule, the interior of all palaces I have ever seen has been out of date and uncomfortable and the Berlin Schloss was no exception to the rule with dark rooms, heavy, old-fashioned furniture and masses of dusty tapestry. I was informed that King Edward’s suite had been got ready under the personal supervision of ‘S.M.’ himself: what delighted me were the books carelessly scattered around to give the rooms a lived-in and homelike appearance. They were, without exception, calf-bound tomes of the *Keepsake* and *Gentleman’s Magazine* order, presented to former rulers of Prussia by Queen Victoria and inscribed to the recipient in the royal, rather spidery hand. The attention was well meant on Nephew Wilhelm’s part, but I could not see the *Keepsake*, for instance, as a suitable bedside book for that bad Uncle Bertie.

King Edward’s Berlin visit passed off quite amicably. There was one incident, however, which, on the pressing request of his entourage, we did not mention at the time, but which gave

those who witnessed it some moments of the acutest anxiety. One day, after lunch at the British Embassy, the King who was placidly enjoying his post-prandial cigar was suddenly seized by a violent fit of coughing. Ever the most punctilious of monarchs, he insisted on wearing on his various public appearances in Berlin one or other of the German uniforms he was entitled to don. On this occasion his rather portly figure was crammed into the skin-tight tunic of his Prussian Hussar regiment and before the high, close-fitting collar could be unfastened, he was purple in the face and well-nigh at his last gasp. It was touch-and-go before they were able to ease him and give him air.

In her letters to General de Robilant, Princess Marie Radziwill, describing King Edward's visit to Berlin, mentions the monarch's disgust on discovering at the Court ball which was the *clou* of the festivities that the protocol prevented him from getting the whisky and soda he asked for while the dancing was in progress. The Princess does not tell the whole of the story. The King ultimately got his whisky and soda: I witnessed the incident myself. During a pause in the dancing a tall, be-eagled flunkey came striding across the floor to the dais where King Edward and Queen Alexandra were seated with the German Emperor and Empress. On a salver the lackey bore a miniature whisky decanter, a tumbler and a bottle of selters. An impressive silence fell on the glittering throng as, with a low obeisance, the footman presented the tray to the English King, followed by a thrilled whisper that ran round of '*Ach! Der Eduard kriegt sein Visky-soda!*' (Edward is getting his whisky and soda.) With regal composure and as if entirely unconscious of the fact that some 800 pairs of eyes were watching his every movement, King Edward emptied the little decanter into the tumbler, filled it up with soda, drained the glass and replaced it on the waiting flunkey's salver, thereupon, with a gay and refreshed air, resuming his conversation with his hostess at his side.

I last saw Sir Frank Lascelles in his retirement in London, in the midst of the Great War, not long before his death. I found him greatly aged. Of the War, of the Germans, of the

Kaiser, he refused to speak. 'It's not the Germany I knew,' he declared tremulously, and repeated, 'It's not the Germany I knew.' I had the impression that he was dwelling in the past, his gaze turned backward down the long vista of the forty-seven years he had spent in diplomacy with their memories of Queen Isabella of Spain, Lord Lyons, the Khedive Ismail, Cromer, Stambuloff, the Tzar Nicholas, William II.

Lascelles was one of the last links between the old diplomacy and the new; and the Great War snapped it.

Our pre-War diplomacy presented some astonishing anomalies, none more astonishing, I submit, than what I believe to be the incontrovertible fact that, until the summer of 1914, our Foreign Secretary had never set foot on the Continent of Europe. Up to that time Sir Edward Grey's solitary excursion outside the British Isles had consisted of a trip to Jamaica – I think, with a Sugar Commission. His first jaunt abroad had to wait until, as Foreign Secretary, in the year 1914, he accompanied King George and Queen Mary on their State visit to France. I am not prepared to say that a Foreign Secretary with no actual experience of foreign countries is necessarily unfit for his job; but I was filled, and am still filled, with grave misgivings as to the ability of a man to hold high office who is so little curious about the life of his contemporaries as never to have undertaken the short trip across the Channel.

The Foreign Office did some very odd things. Sir Maurice de Bunsen's predecessor at the Vienna Embassy was Sir Fairfax Cartwright, who was partially paralysed. That he was physically totally unfitted for his job was evident to the most casual visitor who had the rather painful experience of being received by him. His retention at such a vitally important post as the capital of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the spearhead of the '*Drang nach Osten*' that was to plunge the world into war, impressed me as being 'one of those things which no feller can understand', as Lord Dundreary said. But it seems that Cartwright had been savagely attacked by the German Press over an interview with an unnamed British diplomat criticising Germany's foreign policy, published by the leading Vienna

newspaper, the *Neue Freie Presse*, and generally but falsely ascribed to Cartwright and I imagine the Foreign Office felt that his transfer might be interpreted as an admission that he was at fault in the matter. Thus, for considerations of prestige, a man who, mentally as well as physically, was definitely below par, was retained at this all-important post.

Cartwright was really a highly unsuitable Ambassador in other ways. From some old 'breeze', dating from the days when they were both *en mission* at the Bavarian Court at Munich, he and Dumaine, the French Ambassador at Vienna, were not on speaking terms. My diary (1912) notes that, 'to annoy Cartwright,' Dumaine informed a high official at the Ballplatz that Great Britain intended to annex Crete. This idle tale crept into the *Temps*, and caused no end of a rumpus.

Relations between the newspapers and our Diplomatic Service were very much what the officials concerned wished them to be. At home the extraordinary perspicacity and urbanity of Sir William (now Lord) Tyrrell, then Private Secretary at the Foreign Office, in conjunction with the admirable discipline of Fleet Street wherever matters of national importance are concerned, kept a chosen few of the leading newspaper experts on foreign affairs on the right path. Abroad, the newspaper correspondent's reception at our embassies and legations depended to a large extent on the attitude of the man on the spot towards the Press in general. I was present at a highly ridiculous scene shortly before the opening of the Hague Disarmament Conference of 1907. The chief British delegate (appointed by the Liberal Government) was Sir Edward Fry, an estimable old Quaker gentleman, over eighty years of age, who was an acknowledged authority on international law and also on British mosses. His fellow-delegates were the late Lord Reay, aged about seventy-nine, who was as much Dutch as he was English, and Sir Ernest Satow, not much younger, who, from long residence in Japan, in mind and almost in appearance, was practically a Japanese. I remember the chief Japanese delegate showing me a silken scroll about six feet long inscribed with birthday greetings in Japanese which Satow had sent him. 'I think Sir Ernest write my language

much better than many Japanese,' Mr. Tzuzuki told me admiringly.

The eve of the assembly of the Conference the British newspaper representatives were assembled to meet the head of the British Delegation. Men such as the late Dr. Dillon, the extraordinarily erudite correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, who spoke Russian, Armenian and half a dozen other languages as fluently as he spoke English, and famous 'specials' such as the late Sir William Maxwell, were there. Sir Edward Fry was in an extremely petulant mood. He could give the journalists no assistance, he declared and added, crossly, 'Indeed, I don't know why the newspapers sent any of you here!' He was as good as his word. But for a certain amount of 'bootleg' news which, in my own case, I extracted from Edward Crowe, the secretary of the British delegation, I should have had to depend wholly on non-British sources like the late Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, the chief German delegate, who wine and dined us all freely and, as was his undoubted right, pumped us full of German propaganda.

When later on I went to Paris to represent the *Daily Mail* I bore with me a letter of introduction from Sir Edward Goschen, our Ambassador in Berlin, to Sir Francis Bertie, our Ambassador in Paris. Bertie was a great character, a white-haired, rosy-cheeked old gentleman, with the bluntest of manners and a blistering tongue. His enormous moral courage stood us in good stead when, in the years immediately before the War, Caillaux, the then Prime Minister, was flirting with Germany to the imminent danger of disrupting the Entente Cordiale and the British Ambassador stood up to him with tremendous gusto. Bertie always wore a top-hat when he went out, a curious 'tile' of ancient cut, impeccable lustre and a very high crown – '*le dernier haut-de-forme de Paris*', the boulevardiers called him.

Well, I presented my letter and had a cigarette and a very pleasant chat with His Excellency. When I rose to take my leave Bertie said, 'I am very glad to have seen you but I have to tell you that the only newspaper man I receive is *The Times* correspondent. Good day!' There was nothing personal in

the rebuff, however, for, finding himself next to Lady Northcliffe at a lunch in Paris some weeks later, he said some nice things about me.

The British Embassy in Paris in the rue du Faubourg St. Honoré was once the hotel of the Princess Pauline Borghese, Napoleon's wayward sister. Her bed still stands in the Ambassador's sleeping apartment and the late Lord Dufferin had a little joke which he liked to spring on his women guests at the Embassy. '*Et maintenant,*' he would say when they went away after some Embassy dinner party, '*je m'en vais me coucher dans le lit de Pauline.*'

In the days before the War the Embassy boasted a most imposing functionary in the person of the porter, a Bumble-like character, gorgeously arrayed, of immense dignity and unshakable British phlegm. When the French Government, taking with it the whole of the Diplomatic Body, quitted Paris in August 1914 on the approach of the Germans ('*Je vous ai bien dit de vous en aller,*' stout-hearted old Galliéni, Governor of Paris, told President Poincaré, '*mais ne pas de f . . . le camp!*')—an Englishman called at our Embassy in Paris, not knowing that the Ambassador had left for Bordeaux with the rest. Much to his surprise he found the Embassy porter in his shirt sleeves, comfortably ensconced in a chair at the courtyard gate, eating an apple with the aid of a clasp knife. 'Can you tell me where I shall find the Ambassador?' inquired the visitor. Bumble jerked a nonchalant thumb over his shoulder. 'Opped it!' he replied, his mouth full of apple.

When Sir Frank Lascelles retired full of years from the Berlin Embassy in 1908, Sir Edward Goschen, the Ambassador in Vienna, took his place. Up to the time, the end of 1909, when I left Berlin, I saw Goschen frequently and had many talks with him, without discerning, I admit, behind his suave and rather ponderous exterior, any gleam of the real character of the man who was to justify our whole Foreign Office system by the noble dignity with which he spoke for England in the historic 'Scrap of Paper' interview on the eve of the World War.

A certain heaviness of build and the thick beard he wore, abundantly streaked with grey, gave him a somewhat lethargic air. One had the impression of a staid, rather cynical individual, for whom, after a long career spent in the Diplomatic Service, life ran on well-grooved lines. He was sixty-one. Obviously, Berlin would be his last post. Nothing more could happen to him except to retire, with a decoration and a pension, on reaching the appointed age.

Goschen was friendly but wary, with a dry humour and a taste for epigram. When Prince Bülow was dismissed from the Chancellorship, there was talk of Count Wedel, Governor of Alsace-Lorraine, whose blustering manner was notorious, as his successor. With a malicious twinkle in his eye, Goschen said to me, 'A terminological inexactitude dished up to me by Bülow in palatable form is infinitely preferable to the raw edge of Wedel's tongue.' The morning after the declaration of war, one of the Kaiser's A.D.C.s called upon the British Ambassador with a message to say that His Majesty, who had been once proud to wear British uniform as honorary Admiral of the Fleet and Field-Marshal had now divested himself of these honours. In subsequently mentioning the incident in his dispatch, Goschen observed dryly, 'I would add that the above message lost nothing of its petulant acerbity by the manner of its delivery.'

When he took over the Berlin Embassy he had represented Great Britain at diplomatic posts all over the world (including a stage at Washington as Secretary of Embassy in 1893) for nearly forty years. He lacked Lascelles's more aristocratic background. Not Eton, but Rugby, most democratic of Public Schools, was his Alma Mater, and he belonged to a family which was of the City rather than the landed class and had distinguished itself in banking and in politics – the founder of his house was a Leipzig bookseller, which may have explained the curious reluctance the Ambassador evinced to speak German, although he knew it well. The German Press commonly asserted that the name was originally spelt 'Göschen' and that the ancestor was Jewish.

To a strong bourgeois strain in Sir Edward Goschen was

allied a robust common sense and a certain forthrightness of speech which he displayed on one noteworthy occasion at a State banquet in Vienna in the year previous to his coming to Berlin, when he spoke his mind plainly to Baron von Aehrenthal, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister. Aehrenthal, who, as the author of the forward Habsburg policy in the Balkans, was one of the principal instigators of the World War, had solemnly assured Goschen that he knew nothing of Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria's rumoured intention to proclaim Bulgaria's independence and make himself King, and the British Ambassador informed London in this sense. When a day or two later the expected event took place – with Aehrenthal's complete knowledge and connivance, as there was ample evidence to show – Goschen did not mince his words. '*Vous, Monsieur le Ministre, vous n'aimez pas la verité!*' he did not scruple to tell Aehrenthal to his face at the Emperor of Austria's dinner table.

Which is as polite a way as I can think of for calling another man a liar.

In 1908 when Sir Frank Lascelles retired, the British Foreign Office was by no means happy about Anglo-German relations. For the Berlin post Sir Edward Grey wanted a man with his feet firmly planted on the ground – to put it bluntly, one who would prove less amenable to the 'snob appeal' of the Kaiser and his courtiers and less likely to have his leg pulled by Prince Bülow, than Lascelles had shown himself to be. The choice fell on Goschen. A 'safe man'. Solid rather than brilliant.

When Austria-Hungary, charging the Serbian Government with the direct responsibility for the Archduke's murder, presented its notorious ultimatum to Belgrade, Goschen was on leave in England. He hastened to rejoin his post. To the growling of the approaching storm the July days slipped away. The 4th of August arrived. Already the German armies were on the march. Germany and Russia were at war, Germany and France were at war. Late that afternoon Goschen received from London the momentous order to demand from the German Government the explicit assurance that Germany would

not violate Belgian neutrality and to request a reply by midnight, or, failing a satisfactory reply, to ask for his passports.

To von Jagow, the German Foreign Minister, Goschen presented the demand and received the expected refusal – it was the rupture. From the Foreign Office the Ambassador went into the Imperial Chancellor's palace next door to take his leave of Herr von Bethmann Hollweg.

'I found the Chancellor very agitated,' he wrote in his historic dispatch. 'He at once began an harangue which lasted for about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree – just for the word "neutrality", a word which in war-time had so often been disregarded – just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her.'

Goschen could not let this pass. Just as much as it was 'a matter of life and death', he declared, quoting the words von Jagow had used to him a short while before, for Germany to violate Belgian neutrality, so it was a matter of life and death for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked. That solemn compact, said the Ambassador, simply has to be kept or what confidence could anyone have in engagements given by Great Britain in the future?

Not long after Sir Edward Goschen returned to London from Berlin on the outbreak of war I went to see him in Wilbraham Gardens. I asked him in what language his historic interview with the German Chancellor had been conducted and he said in German – the exact word of the famous phrase was '*ein Stückchen Papier*', 'or something like that'. I inquired why he had translated this as 'a scrap of paper' and he told me he supposed he must have had in mind Sardou's play of that name.

On Goschen's death in May 1924, I thought I should put on record this small contribution to the history of an utterance that had played so large a part in uniting the British race on the outbreak of war. Accordingly, I wrote a letter to *The*

Times, setting forth the above facts. In the meantime, Dr. Hubert Hall, Reader in History at the University of London, had also written to *The Times*, his letter forestalling mine. From this and a subsequent letter of Dr. Hall's it appeared that in 1915, at the request of the Editor of the *Revue Historique*, he had inquired at the Foreign Office as to the language in which the historic phrase had been spoken and was informed, after the question had been submitted to Sir Edward Goschen, that 'the whole of the relevant conversation had been carried on in English'; further, according to Dr. Hall's information, a friend of Sir Edward Goschen's had in his possession a signed statement to the effect that 'the German Chancellor spoke throughout in English'. I have since seen a note appended to Sir Edward Goschen's 'Scrap of Paper' dispatch as published in Vol. XI of *British Documents on the Origins of the War* (Gooch and Temperley). In this the Editors state that, in reply to an inquiry, Sir Horace Rumbold (who was Counsellor of Embassy in Berlin on the declaration of war) writes that, according to private notes that he made at the time, Sir Edward Goschen informed him on the same day that 'the Chancellor made a set speech in English'.

Against this evidence I can set not only the Ambassador's own statement to me, but also some interesting facts elicited by the correspondence that ensued in *The Times* and other papers, notably as the result of Goschen's allusion to the Sardou play. *A Scrap of Paper*, with the late Gerald du Maurier and Madge Titheradge in the leading rôles, was actually running at the Criterion Theatre in London when war broke out: moreover, it appeared that on at least two occasions Sir Edward Goschen himself had acted in amateur productions of *A Scrap of Paper*, once at his brother Viscount Goschen's country seat at Seacox Heath and once at a charity performance at the British Embassy in Constantinople, when he was Secretary of Embassy there. Lastly, in a letter to *The Times*, it was mentioned that a German newspaper (the *Frankfurter Wochenblatt*) in its obituary notice of Goschen stated that the actual words which Herr von Bethmann Hollweg was reported to have used were '*ein Fetzen Papier*'.

I would remark that it was Bethmann Hollweg, not Goschen, who uttered the phrase. The title of Sardou's play cannot have been in the Chancellor's mind when he was speaking, as it undoubtedly was in Goschen's, when the Ambassador came to summarise the interview for the purposes of his dispatch: he was only recently back from leave and may well have seen the London revival of a play with which he must have been thoroughly familiar. As Goschen informed me when I called on him on his return to London, he and the Chancellor habitually used German and English indifferently in their conversations. But I met Herr von Bethmann Hollweg on more than one occasion and I can testify that, while he knew English adequately, he spoke it stiffly and with a strong accent. What is more natural than that, under the influence of strong emotion and addressing a visitor thoroughly conversant with German, he should have lapsed, even from 'a set speech in English', into his own language?

Goschen told me that the exact words were '*ein Stückchen Papier*', 'or something like that'. Bethmann Hollweg, Squire of Hohen Finow in the Mark of Brandenburg, was a Junker of Junkers and the expression '*ein Fetzen Papier*' (*Fetzen*, literally, a rag), so much more drastic than the other, is absolutely characteristic of his class, as anyone acquainted with the Prussian Junker type and the subtleties of the German tongue, will appreciate.

Well, there the matter rests. But the controversy shows the difficulties the historian has to contend with in attempting to elicit the truth even about events less than a decade old.

Life in our diplomatic service before the War was a leisurely affair. It always seemed to me that the Foreign Office lift, one of the earliest to be installed in London, set the pace of the office. You rang the bell and waited: you rang the bell and waited some more: you rang for the third time and then, with luck, to the pleasant sound of falling waters, you were aware of a fluttering commotion in the cage, as though a bird were imprisoned there, beating its wings against the bars, and with a vast clanking and at a barely perceptible rate of progress,

the elevator ultimately appeared. The story goes that, on one occasion, an American visitor, waiting for the lift, found himself in company with Lord Curzon, then Foreign Secretary and as usual Olympically aloof. After watching the measured approach of the elevator, the visitor turned to the Secretary of State and observed jauntily, 'You know, in our country the trees come up quicker than this!'

It always seemed to me that the young gentlemen of the Diplomatic Service were allowed a great deal of rope. The most astonishing 'floaters' were condoned: as long as our budding diplomatists behaved themselves with suitable decorum, they could get away with murder, as the saying goes. Some of the Foreign Office blunders are historic. One of my prized possessions is White Paper China No. 2 (1898) presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty, containing some correspondence between Sir Claude MacDonald, British Minister at Peking, and the Tsung-li Yâmen, the Chinese Foreign Office. The future Lord Curzon was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the time and through some inexplicable oversight, a characteristically acrimonious minute which he attached to one of the British Minister's dispatches became incorporated in the text. The dispatch in question as reproduced in the White Paper reads as follows:

Sir C. MacDonald to the Tsung-li Yâmen

Peking, February 9, 1898.

MM. LES MINISTRES,

YOUR Highnesses and your Excellencies have more than once intimated to me that the Chinese Government were aware of the great importance that has always been attached by Great Britain to the retention in Chinese possession of the Yang-tsze region, now entirely hers, as providing security for the free course and development of trade.

Strictly speaking, this is not grammar. 'China' has not been mentioned, only 'Chinese possession' and the 'Chinese Government', neither of which are of the feminine gender. 'Hers' can only refer, according to the ordinary rules of grammar, to Great Britain.

However, I suppose we must not be pedantic, but must leave Sir C. MacDonald and the Yâmen to use bad grammar if they prefer.

I shall be glad to be in a position to communicate to Her Majesty's Government a definite assurance that China will never alienate any territory in the provinces adjoining the Yang-tsze to any other Power, whether under lease, mortgage, or any other designation. Such an assurance is in full harmony with the observations made to me by your Highnesses and your Excellencies.

I avail, etc.,

(Signed) CLAUDE M. MACDONALD.

It will scarcely be believed, but, in announcing the outbreak of war, on the night of August 4, 1914, the Foreign Office made it appear that Germany had declared war on England. I was the diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Mail* at the time and was down at the Privy Council Office in Downing Street that night waiting for the communiqué to appear. One of the assistant under-secretaries at the Foreign Office (who happened to be an old friend of mine) distributed the communiqué and, as they were holding the paper for it, I jumped into my taxi without reading it and tore back to the office. Arrived there I discovered the blunder and promptly rang up my friend. 'Oh, my goodness,' he exclaimed. 'I didn't draft it, I never even read it—you'd better bring it back.' 'No time,' I told him, 'I'll put it right myself. But you'd better give the other newspapers a buzz!'

Another classic 'bloomer' is associated with the opening of the Austrian bombardment of Belgrade (July 29, 1914—note the date: within the week we were at war with Germany) when, in view of the exposed position of the British Legation, the Vice-Consul removed all ciphers and archives to the *German* Legation! This was too much, even for the Foreign Office, which pursued the British Chargé d'Affaires, who had left for Nish four days before with the Serbian Government, with frantic orders to have all ciphers and secret documents burnt forthwith. The correspondence concerning this incident is brief but highly entertaining. It is reproduced in one

of the volumes of the official series *British Documents on the Origin of the War*.

But, all in all, the Diplomatic Service lived up to its high traditions of dignity and devotion, if only in the way in which an ambassador of ordinary attainments like Sir Edward Goschen rose to the occasion at need. When I knew him in Berlin Sir Edward enjoyed the reputation of being a pleasant-mannered, easy-going and rather phlegmatic person; and I should never have suspected that, of all the British Ambassadors I have known, he was destined to fill a niche in the valhalla of great Englishmen. But, when without warning he found himself confronted with the choice between honour and dishonour, the training of a lifetime spent in the honourable service of our diplomacy was at his back to steel him and to guide him, and it was the voice of England that gave the tempter his answer.

CHAPTER VIII

'ER'

WHEN on the night of August 4, 1914, England found herself at war with Germany, the German Emperor, for the first time since his accession, began to fade from the newspapers of the world as a front-page topic. We heard of him spasmodically behind the curtain of war, he emerged into brief but tragic prominence in the crowded days of the November revolution before disappearing into the Dutch mists, and notoriety sought him out finally when, for vote-catching purposes at home, Mr. Lloyd George dangled the noose that was to hang the arch-villain before the somewhat sceptical eyes of the world. From the moment, however, that the general mobilisation order was signed and the army took charge of German destinies, the long exile of Doorn was foreshadowed.

The monarch's course, as events were to prove, was run. With the outbreak of war he became the virtual prisoner of the Great General Staff. One can almost hear the 'Ouf!' of relief with which they saw him affix his signature to the fatal decree, saw him delivered bound hand and foot into their power. The Supreme War Lord who in peace-time had proclaimed 'In war, in any case, I shall do everything myself,' discovered in war that his usefulness was virtually restricted to carrying out the ceremonial duties of his rank. No more speeches, save of a purely routine order to the troops, no more jaunts abroad, no more 'personal policy', none of those alarums and excursions which, for a quarter of a century, had kept the world on tenterhooks.

The tossing plumes and steel breastplates of those reviews on the Tempelhofer Feld had given place to steel helmet and field grey: the shining sword was laid aside for the rifle and

the blunt-snouted machine-gun. War, evoked in turgid metaphor in a quarter of a century of stirring speeches, was bleak in its reality. It swept aside the Imperial caprices on which in peace-time so many plans of the army heads had been wrecked: it lowered the blinds and drew the dust covers over the brilliant Court which the monarch had gathered about him as a background to his martial figure resplendent in glittering uniform. It gave no scope for a versatile talent that had composed a song, painted a picture, produced a ballet, designed a church.

Yet William II had had a good run for his money, as the saying goes. For sheer picturesqueness, for sheer unexpectedness, for sheer news value, as they say in Fleet Street, the world has known nothing like him since he went into the discard. Throughout his reign, until the outbreak of the World War, the brightest searchlights of publicity played about him: for twenty-six years continual storms of controversy raged about his head. He did not court newspaper notoriety, as modern politicians and film stars court it: he knew nothing about newspapers and his newspaper reading was restricted to excerpts culled, and at need, carefully 'cooked', by the Foreign Office. But his nature craved action. '*Rast' ich, so rost' ich*' (If I rest, I rust) might have been invented for him as a slogan.

He was a terror to the newspaper men. In the five years I spent in Berlin before the War I don't think I ever went to bed without wondering uneasily what 'the Kaiser' had been up to. Troop inspections, especially inspections of recruits, from which Press and public were rigorously excluded, were his favourite occasions for making indiscreet speeches. In such cases frantic efforts would be made by the authorities to keep 'S.M.'s' latest rhetorical effort from the newspapers; but they always leaked out. Very often the Socialist newspapers got hold of them or an obscure provincial sheet, in all innocence, would publish something, and the fat was in the fire. The most astonished person on such occasions I veritably believe was the Emperor himself. He was the Supreme War Lord, wasn't he? To encourage the troops leaving for China,

on a punitive expedition against those damned Boxers who had murdered the German Ambassador, surely he was entitled to bid them give no quarter? And with all this Socialism about, what was wrong with his reminding the recruits that they owed blind obedience to their Emperor, even if it came to shooting their own fathers and brothers?

I saw the Kaiser in his heyday on innumerable occasions and frequently heard him speak—always he captured my interest by reason of the intricate psychological problem he presented. I studied him in many moods: in martial mood, on manoeuvres or inspecting troops; in scientific mood, attending a lecture at the Berlin University; in religious mood, at the dedication of some church; in a mood of the deepest depression as at the time of the celebrated *Daily Telegraph* interview, when the whole nation was against him and there were moments when he thought of abdicating. A British writer, George Renwick, who caught a glimpse of him in such a despairing phase, wrote of 'the Kaiser's icy black look'.

His eye was dark and restless, his skin sallow and almost yellow in hue, his face set in hard, arrogant lines, stressed by the famous moustache turned up at the corners. The '*Kaiser-Schnurrbart*', as it was called, was the invention of Habig, the Imperial hairdresser, at whose shop in the Dorotheen-Strasse in Berlin I used to get my hair cut. Throughout the nation loyal Germans adopted it and '*Schnurrbart-Binden*', gauze binders worn across the mouth at night to ensure the correct set of the moustache, were sold by the million and made Habig's fortune. Every Prussian officer of my acquaintance had one: it is odd to reflect that one could probably not purchase such an article in Germany to-day when the fashion has turned—human nature never changes—to the diminutive 'toothbrush' sported by the Führer.

He made in uniform as splendid a figure as he made an abject one in plain clothes. He very rarely wore '*Zivil*' and when he did his taste was dreadful—it ran to checks and 'loud' ties and slouch hats of the broad-brimmed variety which, in combination with his habitual slightly swashbuckling air, suggested a foreign anarchist. Even when he went shooting

he wore uniform, a special hunting dress of his own designing, which the select few among his hunting cronies were privileged to possess.

Uniform sat him magnificently. On parade he made a superb soldierly figure, the like of which we shall not see again in our time; but he had no poise – he impressed me as never being very sure of himself. Anglo-Saxons laughed at his posturings as theatrical: the more intelligent among his own subjects had an indulgent shrug for his petty vanities. True, he was vain and boastful, but in my estimation of the man, what made him so restlessly anxious ever to assert himself, to thrust himself into the centre of the stage, was the sense of inferiority from which he suffered, owing to his crippled arm.

From birth his left arm was quite useless, a dead limb that he habitually carried with the hand tucked out of sight in the side pocket of his tunic. He had to eat one-handed, with a fork with a special cutting prong – when he dined out at one of the embassies in Berlin his '*Leibjäger*' or personal body servant brought the fork along and stood behind his chair to serve him. His infirmity prevented him from mounting a horse unaided. It was pathetic to see the Emperor, who looked so regal in uniform on foot and horseback alike, mounting his horse at manœuvres, as I have seen him a dozen times. He always favoured tall officers in his entourage and these would gather round forming an impenetrable screen, behind which the monarch was hoisted into the saddle. At the risk of propounding a theory which I realise may sound far-fetched, I have always believed that it was this infirmity of the young Emperor's which first directed his thoughts towards the sea and so directly fostered the idea of a great German Navy. The Kings of Prussia were traditionally soldiers and it must have bitterly galled the successor of '*der Alte Fritz*', with his strongly romantic temperament, not to be able to spring lightly into the saddle like his forbears and ride hell-for-leather in a cavalry charge.

His was a brilliant mind crammed with information very much, I have often thought, as his maternal grandfather's, the

beloved Albert's mind must have been crammed. In his interpretation of his kingly office, he considered that the monarch should always be abreast of the latest developments of human thought and able to hold his own with, if not to instruct, the experts. He was a model husband and father, deeply affectionate, and a loyal—an all too loyal—friend, as his disastrous experience at the hands of Eulenburg and Bülow, among others, was to demonstrate. He was well-meaning, but like so many well-meaning people, his impulses were often disastrous.

His faults were many, but they were all on the surface—the tragedy was that there was no one to correct them. His mercurial temperament was unable to tolerate honest-minded criticism about him. As the years rolled on the 'yes-men' he gradually gathered about him degenerated into the coterie of time-servers and flatterers, headed by the brilliant and degenerate Prince Philip Eulenburg, known to history as the Camarilla.

Rarely if ever he heard the truth. In official circles it was axiomatic that the truth was as welcome a guest as the measles. The whole Court, the whole government, were in a conspiracy to let 'him' (Er) as Eulenburg and his friends called the Emperor, hear only what he wished to hear. When that strange journalistic genius, Maximilian Harden, a Polish Jew by origin and brother of an important Berlin banker, was denouncing the Camarilla in his widely-read weekly *Die Zukunft* in attacks so thinly-veiled as to leave no doubt as to the peculiar morals of the clique, it required the fearless initiative of the Crown Prince, who finally took the articles to his father, before William II caught even a whisper of what was being proclaimed from the housetops.

I was present at the Harden trial. Nominally, the pamphleteer was on trial for criminally libelling Count Kuno von Moltke, one of the minor members of the Camarilla, but actually the once all-powerful Prince Eulenburg and through him, the Emperor, were arraigned. In the Continental manner, the defence was allowed the greatest latitude in bringing in totally irrelevant matters concerning the private lives not

only of the witnesses but also of persons who were not even called upon to testify. Youthful excesses, in some cases stretching as far back as a quarter of a century, which the individuals concerned must have believed to have been long since buried and forgotten, were pitilessly exposed to the light: day after day, from my seat in court, I watched the past, as inexorably as in any tragedy of Sophocles, rise up and overwhelm these highly placed and once influential courtiers. Afterwards I went to the court martial of two Guards officers, of aristocratic birth and moving in the highest circles in Berlin, who were thus caught up in this maelstrom of scandalous revelations, and that was a tragic business, too.

In all this there was no reflection against the morals of the monarch. Actually Maximilian Harden was used by Prince Eulenburg's political foes to break the power of the Camarilla: what he himself was after was to demonstrate the moral character of those who, by toadying to the sovereign, were able to usurp the functions of his responsible advisers and exert a real influence on affairs of State. The Byzantine spirit which William II fostered spread through the entire system of government like a disease that attacks a sturdy tree. It crept into the Army, the Navy, too. There were '*Salon-Generäle*', men who received high promotion against the claims of more meritorious but more outspoken candidates, because they were hail-fellow-well-met with H.M., and '*Salon-Admiräle*'. Count von Moltke, nephew of the great Moltke, successor of von Schlieffen as Chief of the Great General Staff and inheritor of the Schlieffen plan for the war against France, was of the '*Salon-General*' order. I used to meet him at the house of Frau Ossip Schubin, a well-known German novelist, in the Potsdamerstrasse.

It was not until I received a skull wound in the War and came under the treatment of Sir Henry Head, the great brain specialist, that I learned anything about the endocrine glands, which he was one of the first British scientists to study. But, on looking back, I realise that von Moltke, with his great height, large nose and rather adenoidal air, was a hyperpituitary. I remember him as a charming man, rather taciturn, but

always willing to talk music or painting with the musicians and artists frequenting jolly Frau Schubin's salon. When war broke out, I never could picture him as shouldering the frightful burden of responsibility as head of the German armies: as history knows, in the upshot his health gave way under the strain of the onward rush to Paris and lost the Battle of the Marne.

Under the influence of William II the Ministers of State, ambassadors and even University professors were infected with the Byzantine malady. More than this, every German embassy abroad had its spy, as Wolff-Metternich and Lichnowsky in London were to learn to their cost, who reported against his chief, if not to the Emperor himself, at least to some irresponsible quarter that had the Imperial ear.

William II possessed no stability of mind. In all his indiscretions his procedure never varied. On the spur of the moment, inspired by the appeal which the occasion might happen to make to his romantic temperament, he would deliver a reckless speech or dispatch a foolish telegram, then, when the storm broke and he had to face the consequences of his action, he would start to waver, finally leaving his responsible ministers to get him out of the scrape. I have always thought that, when he returned to Berlin from his North Sea cruise towards the end of July 1914, and heard the war thunder growling all about, he would have liked to have backed out – in fact, I made this idea of mine the theme of my first novel, *The Man with the Clubfoot*. But mobilisation was on the way: this time the Great General Staff was taking no chances with 'S.M.'s' second thoughts – it was too late.

His judgment was always apt to be swayed by the last person who spoke to him. I believe it would be possible to take a file of Foreign Office dispatches for any year of the ex-Kaiser's reign and, comparing these with the list of his audiences, trace back to his visitors the origin of many of the oddly unbalanced and often extremely crude marginal notes with which it was his custom to furnish such dispatches.

Looking backward, it seems to me that the Emperor's character definitely degenerated during the thirty years of his

rule. What is certain is that, during the last decade preceding the outbreak of the World War, he was not the man he had been in the earlier part of his reign. The monarch who had the courage to dismiss a popular idol like Prince Bismarck because he foresaw that the statesman, with his eighteenth-century mind, would inevitably have embroiled the young German Empire with Russia, would not have been hoodwinked by a specious and unscrupulous 'climber' like Prince Bülow.

Various reasons occur to me to account for this. In the last years of the Empire, William II was becoming aware of the vacuum of his own creation in which he lived: he was conscious of having lost to a large extent the faith and affection of his subjects, particularly in the Army – the outcry evoked by the *Daily Telegraph* interview was a terrible awakening for him. Modern science tells us that men as well as women are subject to change of life: however that may be, at fifty-five, his age in 1914, William II's resilience and belief in himself were certainly impaired.

Compared with the measures by which modern dictators restrain unfavourable comments about themselves, the *lèse-majesté* edicts of pre-War Germany seem very small beer to-day. The Social Democratic newspapers had a curious system for coping with the inevitable prosecution following upon any outspoken comment regarding the latest Imperial *gaffe*. By law, every newspaper had to bear the name of the responsible editor printed upon it: in the event of a prosecution he was brought to trial. It was the custom of the Red Press to hire some nondescript, an out-at-elbows actor or someone of the sort, who, in return for a modest wage, consented to have his name printed on the newspaper in question as responsible editor, stand trial as such and at need, go to jail. A proxy of this kind was known as a '*Sitzredakteur*' (jail editor).

Which reminds me – in Vienna, before the War, the entire daily Press, with one exception, was Jewish. As an improvement on the somewhat grubby Galician Hebrews who did most of the outside reporting, these Jewish-owned and Jewish-staffed



THE KAISER WITH HINDENBURG AND LUDENDORFF

By permission of Imperial War Museum.

Berliner dialect, 'there's only the one mad one. You come along with me!'

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Motoring back from Germany through Holland in the summer of '34, my wife and I caught sight of the name of Doorn on a signpost. We decided to make the short *détour* in order to gaze upon the fallen monarch's place of voluntary exile. The twilight of a weeping autumn day was falling as we faced the high wooden gates of the Huis ten Doorn. At our backs was the evening peace of a sleepy Dutch village: before us the trees rising above the lofty wall shivered and shook down the rain-drops.

What memories came crowding as I stood there: what visions, I mused, must haunt the waking and sleeping hours of the man within! Once again I heard the double note of the primrose-yellow *Mercédès* go sounding along the Linden, the roll of drums as the guard on the Brandenburg Gate tumbled out. From graves strung all the way from the North Sea to the Carpathians ghostly Foot Guards seemed to come streaming – the First Regiment, in which the Royal princes served, with the 'sugar-loaf' caps, the 'Maikäfer', the Königin Augusta Grenadiere and all the rest; and the clack of the bushes in the wind merged in the thunder of feet in the goose-step, with colours fluttering and bands crashing out the Alt Brandenburg March.

Memories of the *Hohenzollern* gliding majestically past the long lines of the Fleet, caps waving, guns thundering, or forging a placid path through cobalt seas away from the Northern greyness and the turmoil of politics, foxy Bülow, those unspeakable Socialists: memories of England – of Osborne and of an old lady in a black bonnet who seemed so terrifying to the little boy in a kilt; of Aldershot and the Long Valley, of 'Cousin George', of Cambridge, of Wolseley and Roberts and of red coats gleaming among the bracken; of a sorrowing multitude, black against the London winter russet and no sound but the thump of muffled drums and the rustle of feet as the '*gesegnete Grossmutter*' was borne to her last rest. Memories of Prussian greatcoats grey against the snow at the Nailing of the Colours, memories of the Torch Dance in the Weisser Saal of the Schloss

at Royal weddings, memories of cities gay with bunting, of whiteclad damsels, of the bald heads of bowing Bürgermeister. Memories of merry beer evenings at the Schloss, with the charming 'Phili' at the piano and Excellenz Podbielski, the red-faced and pot-bellied 'Pod', telling his broad stories and that droll fellow, Von Hülsen, imitating a ballerina so killingly in a *tutu* with his face painted: memories of the autumn tints of the Fürstenberg woods and of the bearded keepers mustering the day's kill by torchlight in the Schloss courtyard after dinner.

Faces seemed to peer out of the dusk beyond the wall, the faces that surround a throne, faces that smile ecstatically, ingratiatingly, awed faces, the frozen faces of soldiers, but never an angry, never a sulky face. As there was none in his days of high fortune to gainsay him, so, when disaster befell, there was none to tell him where duty lay. The last choice, as the first, was his. Well-meaning to the end, he chose retreat. Flight rather than the risk of civil war.

It was his last mistake. History closed the book on him, and, it may well be, on his dynasty.

Now Hitler sits in his place and the German people, once more a nation in arms, is held in a discipline more iron even than it knew under the old Empire. The Nazis have written 'Finis' to any dreams that William may have fostered of returning to the throne: in the light of the memoirs which his contemporaries have published since his fall his figure shrinks rather than grows. Time was when all round the earth the news desks held their ears cocked for the lightest word from Potsdam: to-day the exile of Doorn makes no more noise in the world than the sound of his woodcutter's axe breaking upon the stillness of a Dutch dorp.

I turned my back on those barred, forbidding gates and we drove on in silence to the Hoek.

'Men are we and must grieve when e'en the shade
Of that which once was great is passed away.'

CHAPTER IX

IMPERIAL BERLIN, 1904-9

BERLIN in the year of grace 1904 was still in many aspects the shabby provincial capital it had always been. William II did what he could to smarten up the exterior appearance of the city, at any rate, of the centre; but his efforts, especially the rows of rather mediocre statues of his Hohenzollern ancestors with which he lined the Sieges-Allée in the Tiergarten, were but scantily appreciated. In general, his desire to transform Berlin into a *Weltstadt*, worthy of the capital of a great Empire, was hampered by the definitely small-town character of its inhabitants.

The natives of Berlin are reputed to possess a strong dose of Polish or Tartar blood, which is held to explain a certain brusqueness of manner notorious wherever German is spoken. However that may be, the average Berliner, in the days when I first became acquainted with the type, strenuously resisted all attempts to metropolitanise him, if I may coin such a verb. It was the Jews who had the luxurious homes and smart equipages, who kept the restaurants and theatres alive with their money: the common run of the Berliner preferred to amuse themselves economically, dress shabbily and regard the foreigner with the slow, interested stare of the untravelled rustic.

The level of public manners was not high. On the other hand the police, mainly recruited from among ex-warrant officers of the Army, brought a barrack-yard gruffness into their relations with the public and were unusually brutal in handling crowds. For the most part, they were of low-grade intelligence, fierce of mien, gross of body, and inclined to be surly rather than civil: Stanley Shaw, a witty Irish friend of mine,

one of the veterans of the foreign correspondents' corps in Berlin, used to say that what most impressed him about the Berlin mounted police was the look of intelligence on the face of the horse. Looking back I realise that the two controlling factors of the attitude of the Berlin police towards the public were firstly, miserable pay (which takes the joy out of any job), second, the perpetual fear of political disorders which, a memory of the revolutionary days of 1848, permeated the whole fabric of the Prussian bureaucratic system and imposed a pitiless, nagging discipline on all ranks of the Berlin police, and, third, the hostile attitude of the public towards them. One is apt to forget that, right up to the German Republic, Prussia had a strictly limited suffrage, fiercely challenged by the rising tide of Social Democracy; and the very streets in the centre of the city, like the Leipziger-Strasse and Unter den Linden, were strategically planned so as to facilitate the rapid dispersal of incipient rioters by the police and military. What is certain is that, of the many changes which the German capital has undergone in the thirty odd years I have known it, none is more striking than the difference between the grumpy '*Blaue*', the Berlin policeman of those early days, and the smart and civil young constables who regulate the city's traffic to-day.

I had one or two turn-ups with the Berlin police, usually arising from the fact that the police did little or nothing to facilitate the work of the newspaper men, native or foreign. I spoke German fluently and at twenty-one, with two years of barging about Fleet Street behind me, I was not in the least cowed by the spectacle of a fat Berlin policeman rolling his eyes, blowing out his cheeks and screaming at me in accents hoarse with fury, 'Weiter! Machen Sie dass Sie 'rauskommen! Vorwärts!' It amused me to stand on my rights, to insist on being taken before the officer in charge. But these hectoring police captains were accustomed to dealing with the docile if surly Berliner; and anything like argument seemed to drive them perfectly frantic. I recall in particular a certain portly police major who, notwithstanding the fact that I gave him my professional card, flatly refused me admission to one of General Booth's crowded Salvation Army meetings. By stolidly and

calmly reiterating my case that it was my right and, indeed, my duty to be present, I reduced him to such a state of almost apoplectic fury that he finally had me arrested. When matters had thus reached a head, I would play my trump card, politely entreating permission to telephone to Dr. Henninger, head of Section Seven, the secret (political) police, a very urbane person in a difficult and not particularly salubrious job, whom I had met socially. The name invariably worked wonders, and I would have my way, though grudgingly and also without apology.

I have written much about the Secret Service in my time: the first Secret Service man I ever met was wished on to me by Henninger. I was alone in my office one afternoon when the door opened without warning and a drink-inflamed face was furtively thrust in. The figure that presented itself was straight out of Dickens, a shabby, shifty-looking individual clad in rusty black and clasp ing an enormous umbrella, with a pair of beady eyes peering suspiciously above a nose polished to a lovely and most expensive hue of red. In silence he advanced to my desk upon which he laid an extremely dirty visiting-card. With some bewilderment I read the improbable name, 'Vogelgesang', followed by the words 'Abteilung VII, Berliner Polizei-Präsidium'.

Still without speaking, he produced a tattered note-book and showed me an entry. To my astonishment I read the name of an acquaintance of mine, a dear old retired Indian colonel who lived in Berlin and who amused himself by contributing occasional letters to one of the Indian newspapers. The colonel did not think much of the Kaiser; and in his comments upon William II he was apt to let himself go. 'The Herr knows the gentleman?' inquired my visitor in a stage whisper. Fortunately the name was misspelt and truthfully I was able to disclaim all knowledge of my friend, on which Herr Vogelgesang departed. But he returned again and again, each time with a fresh scrap of information – the party in question was a colonel '*ausser Dienst*', he played golf and so forth. Now it is a bad business when the secret police of any country begin to take an interest in a person's activities, so I passed word

to the colonel to watch his step. He was a wise old man; he departed from Berlin forthwith, bag and baggage, and I saw Herr Vogelgesang no more.

The fly in the ointment of the Emperor's ambition to make of Berlin a worthy rival to London, Paris and New York as a world centre, a *Weltstadt*, was that so few foreigners of note visited Berlin for pleasure. The bulk of the foreigners who came to Berlin were there on business, or stopped off for a night on their way to Russia: their object was rarely curiosity or amusement. As for the British and Americans visiting Germany, they seldom found their way to the Imperial capital. Young Britons, cramming for the Army or the Diplomatic, went to Hanover or Bonn to learn the language, the girls to the finishing schools at Dresden or Weimar, the students to Heidelberg or Göttingen, the invalids to Wiesbaden (where Dr. Pagenstecher had a famous eye clinic), Nauheim (for the heart) or Baden-Baden. To-day you may fly from London to Berlin in four and a half hours. In the period of which I write I usually travelled from London via the Hoek, leaving London at 8.30 p.m. and not reaching Berlin until 6.45 p.m. the next day. It was a dull as well as a long journey and English and Americans in search of a good time preferred Paris or the Riviera – they did not think of Berlin as being gay.

And yet, already at that time, the night life of the city was held in high repute, what with the Arcadia, the Moulin Rouge and the other modish dance-halls. As compared with Paris, prices were moderate, the atmosphere bright and unforced. The drawback was the public. Whereas at *boîtes* like the Abbaye de Thélème or the Rat Mort in Paris, there was a background of chic frocks and the rather hectic gaiety dispensed by the Russians and the South American *rastaquouères* who frequented such places, in Berlin the tone was crude and provincial, the bulk of the clientèle ill-dressed and sometimes ill-mannered. As a French *maître d'hôtel* at a famous Berlin night restaurant summed up the situation to me, 'Locale, première classe; cuisine, deuxième classe; publique, troisième classe.'

The theatres and concerts were splendid. Joachim and

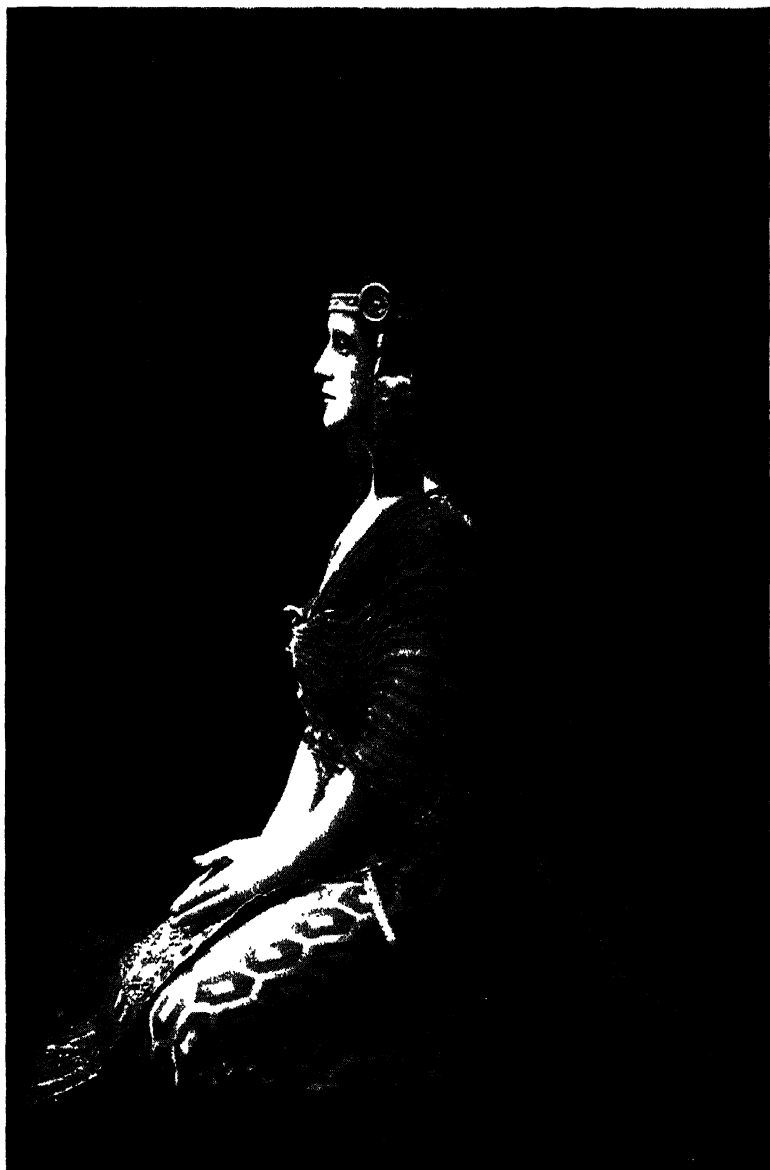
Leopold Godowski were teaching in Berlin and all the great musicians found their way there. One day at the old Café Kaiserhof, a great political resort in the Bismarckian era but now swept away, the friend I was with drew my attention to a little old man in a black cloak and wideawake hat at a neighbouring table. 'Grieg!' he whispered.

The Opera was not so good as the Dresden Opera, where the great Burian was singing, but its orchestra was unsurpassed. Caruso sang several times in Berlin while I was there and Emmy Destinn appeared regularly in Wagnerian and other rôles. Geraldine Farrar was the Grace Moore of her day in Berlin – that is to say, the public raved over her beauty and her charming voice. Her German colleagues were frantically jealous of her success and when she made her farewell appearance she received anonymously but, as was believed, from some of them, such tributes as a dead cat and a straw wreath among the mass of floral trophies that filled her dressing-room.

One night I went to the première of a play called *Der Graf von Charolais* at the Neues Theater. It was a very long and rather dull affair in verse in the setting of the Thirty Years War. One scene, however, in which a cluster of Jewish usurers, headed by a character called 'Der rote Itzig', descended upon the young Graf, so impressed me that I kept the programme. Years after, I came across it and discovered that the part of 'Der rote Itzig' was played by an actor named Max Reinhardt.

In my youth in Berlin, when my friends and I wanted a cheap and amusing evening we used to go to an old-fashioned and rather notorious dance-hall off the Friedrich-Strasse, that roaring highway of prostitution. At Emberg's you paid a mark (1 /-) admission and a penny for a mug of beer and the clientèle consisted of servant maids and soldiers from the adjacent Second Foot Guards barracks. When Max Reinhardt was beginning to spread his wings, he bought Emberg's and transformed it into Berlin's first *théâtre intime* – the Kammerspiele – destined to become the scene of some of his greatest triumphs.

Here he entertained Sir Herbert Tree and his company when, in the spring of 1907, they came to Berlin to play a



MISS ALICE CRAWFORD

season of Shakespeare. No one has to be told that the Germans pride themselves, and justly, on their Shakespearean productions, and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the direction of the Royal theatres, under whose auspices the company from His Majesty's appeared, was not predisposed to help the visitors to eclipse the German standard. Tree was allotted the worst of the Royal theatres for his very elaborate productions, a vast, old-fashioned barrack of a house known as Kroll's Neues Operetten Theater, and mysteriously, every imaginable difficulty proceeded to arise.

The climax came when, in the middle of the performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*, with the Emperor present in the Royal box, the stage-hands struck. Loyal members of the company took their places and started to change the scene. But some unknown miscreant suddenly raised the curtain: actors and actresses scuttled for shelter, leaving the stage carpenter from His Majesty's a fat man in a bowler-hat, in solitary possession of the stage. When the curtain noiselessly glided aloft, his impressive rear elevation, as he stooped over the fish-pond in *Cleopatra's* death scene, was disclosed. It was a full half-minute before the unaccustomed silence about him warned him that something was wrong, then he glanced round and scrambled in a panic, bowler and all, for the wings. Poor Tree was almost in tears.

As it happened, the most important event of my life arose out of Tree's visit to Berlin. I went to the Friedrich-Strasse station to meet him and the company. Before the train had fully stopped an extremely comely young woman, who stood at one of the corridor doors, attempted to descend but unused to the high running-board of the German trains, stumbled and landed in my arms. Neither of us knew it then, but she was destined to remain there permanently, for eventually she did me the honour of becoming my wife.

'Hullo,' she said, as I placed her on her feet, 'who are you?' I told her my name. 'That's funny,' she remarked. 'Kenneth Douglas gave me a letter to you.' As it turned out, I was the only person in Berlin to whom she had an introduction; but that is the way things happen in real life. Now that I am a

novelist, I should never dare to put such a coincidence in a book: I learned a long time ago that real life is far more improbable than fiction can dare to be.

My friend, E. C. (*Trent's Last Case*) Bentley, who had come out with the company for the *Daily Telegraph*, then appeared and introduced us. My unknown was the beautiful Alice Crawford, who, although she had been only three years on the stage, was already playing leading rôles in London – the fact that she had received a thorough grounding in Shakespeare from her father before taking up acting as a career had probably something to do with her meteoric success. She had played leading rôles with that delightful actor, Cyril Maude, notably in *Toddles*, a very successful adaptation from the French that ran for months, and *Shore Acres*, and also made a hit in a one-act play, *The Creole*, as the Empress Josephine to Maude's Napoleon.

Alice Crawford is the only living actress who can boast of having played the part of a king before an audience of five real kings. This was in a sparkling one-act comedy about Pepys, *A Privy Council*, by Richard Price, produced at the Haymarket Theatre with that fine actor, the late Sydney Valentine, as Pepys and Alice Crawford as Mistress Knipp of the King's Playhouse. Alice Crawford's beauty and charm and bubbling high spirits made an instantaneous success of the little play which was honoured by a special command to Sandringham where King Edward VII was entertaining a party of his brother monarchs for the shooting. In the play Mistress Knipp, in order to allay the suspicions of Mistress Pepys who surprises her wayward husband in the act of entertaining the lady to supper at home, disguises herself as Charles II and pretends to be holding a Privy Council. At Sandringham, then, Alice Crawford found herself enacting the part of the Merry Monarch before an illustrious audience that included, besides the King of England, the King of Greece, the King of Norway, the King of Denmark and the King of Portugal – a veritable *parquet de rois*.

She appeared with Sir Herbert Tree in leading parts in many of his Shakespeare productions at His Majesty's and

ultimately played the title rôle with him in his revival of the late Henry Arthur Jones's famous play *The Dancing Girl*. When Hall Caine revived his celebrated religious drama *The Christian*, he chose her for the part of Glory Quayle and later she played the lead in *Matt of Merrymount* with the late Fred Terry, in place of Miss Julia Neilson who had fallen ill, and also appeared in London in the chief Shakespearean women rôles, her Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, being especially praised.

She played the heroine in the late Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's original production of *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*. Jerome K. Jerome wrote the play in the first place for Dave Warfield. But Belasco, Warfield's manager, had doubts about it and relinquished the piece, which was destined to bring fortune both to Jerome and Forbes-Robertson. Forbes-Robertson himself was not very happy about it: it was Gertrude Elliott, his wife, (who played the 'Slavey') who finally decided him to produce it. In his autobiography *My Life and Times* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1926) Jerome K. Jerome has an amusing tale to tell of how he came to engage Alice Crawford for the part of Vivien, the heroine:

"We must have someone supremely beautiful," said Forbes. "There are six women in the play; four of them have to be middle-aged, and my wife has to disguise herself. It's our only chance."

'I thought of Alice Crawford. Time was pressing. We sent her a wire. She had just left for a ball at the Piccadilly Hotel.

"You must go to the ball," said Forbes.

'I went as I was, in a blue serge suit, brown boots and a collar that I had been wearing since eight o'clock in the morning. I made a sensation in the ballroom. I gathered that the people around about took me for a policeman in unnecessarily plain clothes; but I spotted Alice Crawford, and beckoned her outside. A gentleman came up and asked if he could be of any use. I think the idea of bail was in his mind.'

I believe that, in writing this play, the late Jerome K. Jerome, better known as the author of *Three Men in a Boat*

and other humorous novels than as a serious writer, was responding to an evangelical impulse. But the stage habitually distrusts playwrights with a message: I was at the dress-rehearsal of the original productions of *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* at the St. James's Theatre and I remember very clearly that, with the possible exception of Miss Elliott, nobody, from Forbes-Robertson down to the very stage door-keeper, had any faith in a play which was destined to be one of the greatest stage successes ever known.

The Berlin critics were quite determined in advance that Germany had nothing to learn from England as to how Shakespeare should be acted and produced and had their little hatchets all ready for Tree and his company. But they gave unreserved praise to Alice Crawford's exquisitely sensitive playing of Olivia in *Twelfth Night* and of Charmian in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The entire company, from Tree downwards, was thrilled by our romance. When they left on their return to London I accompanied them on the train as far as Stendal, an hour or so along the railway from Berlin, and to help our courtship along, dear old Henry Dana, Tree's general manager, with the greatest tact, had Alice and me locked in a carriage to ourselves. Ever afterwards, whenever I went to London on leave from my Berlin job, I was a welcome guest at His Majesty's. Tree would carry me off to his private rooms in the Dome or to his dressing-room where I would watch him make up and more than once I gave him ideas for a speech which he intended to deliver before the curtain. Sometimes he would take me to rehearsals and we would lunch together off a grilled sole, brought in from the Carlton Grill next door, in the ante-room of the Royal box. He liked an English version I made of Arthur Schnitzler's well-known play *Liebele* and put it on at the Afternoon Theatre, which he ran in conjunction with His Majesty's, under the title of *Light O'Love*. Ultimately he offered me a thousand a year to act as general secretary and play-reader. I did not feel able to accept, but I have often wondered how my future would have shaped itself, if I had joined him.

Dear Tree, what a charming, gay and feckless person he was! His sense of humour was a constant delight. Once when I was with him in Piccadilly Circus my hat blew off. I was about to hurl myself into the thick of the traffic in pursuit when Tree restrained me. 'My brother Max says,' he told me gravely, "'Never run after your hat. Someone is sure to bring it to you.'" And true enough, a moment later, a passer-by dashed up breathless and restored my hat to me.

The War came as a great shock to him. He had believed in Anglo-German friendship and the breach between the two countries affected him deeply. He was dreadfully upset when, at a first night at His Majesty's, soon after the outbreak of hostilities, some boorish 'patriots' in the gallery believing his origin to be German—as a matter of fact, it was Dutch—booed him when he came before the curtain (he was not appearing in the play). Then, at the time of the first air raids, a member of the Garrick Club, who had somehow got hold of a sheet of German Admiralty notepaper, thought it would be funny to play a practical joke on him. So he had a letter written on this official notepaper to Tree in German, something to this effect:

'DEAR SIR HERBERT,

'The next air raid is fixed for September 23rd. Please have the light burning in the Dome as usual.

'Yours sincerely,

'VON TIRPITZ.'

Poor Tree was quite taken in by this stupid and cruel hoax and rushed round to Scotland Yard in a panic to protest his innocence.

I was in Berlin when—I think it was the year after Tree's visit—the original Imperial Russian Ballet first burst upon the entranced eyes of Western Europe. What a troupe it was with Pavlova, Fokine, Bolm and the rest of them! Diaghileff gave me a rover ticket and I doubt if I missed a single performance. I was so enthusiastic that I wrote to Tree and urged him to engage the Ballet to appear at His Majesty's—at that time (it

was before the Ballet's triumphant début at the Châtelet Theatre in Paris) he could have engaged the entire company, with orchestra and decors, for £300 a performance. Tree replied rather loftily that he would not dream of putting on ballet at His Majesty's. After the Russian Ballet's Paris triumph, he changed his mind, but by that time the price had soared beyond an economic figure, as far as His Majesty's Theatre was concerned.

My salary, when I was first appointed to Berlin, was £300 a year. It was not a lot of money but, seeing that my stipend in the home office had been no more than £10 a month, it represented riches to me. Besides, I was allowed expenses on a reasonably generous scale: as Charles Hands, the famous *Daily Mail* reporter – he gave the terms 'Twopenny Tube' and 'suffragette' to the English language – used to say 'Take away my income, take away my salary, but leave, oh, leave me my expense account!'

Aubrey Stanhope, of the *New York Herald*, whom I often met in Berlin in the course of his zigzagging across Europe at the behest of his eccentric proprietor, Gordon Bennett, was the hero of a famous expense account story. Gordon Bennett was in the habit of keeping a sharp eye on his correspondents' expenditure and on one occasion, when Aubrey Stanhope had returned from a special mission to Russia, insisted on checking Stanhope's expense account himself. He inexorably struck out a charge of twenty or thirty pounds for a fur coat. In vain, Stanhope expostulated that a fur coat was indispensable in the depth of the Russian winter: Bennett refused to pass the item, declaring that he was not going to pay for his correspondent's wardrobes. The next time Stanhope returned from a Russian trip and submitted his expense account as before, Bennett initialled it, saying, 'I don't see any fur coat this time,' to which Stanhope – or so the story goes – rejoined, 'No, you don't see it, Commodore, but it's there!'

Then, too, living in Berlin was very cheap. At the popular restaurants like Kempinski's or Zur Traube one could dine exceedingly well for three marks (3s.) – with half a bottle of

hock or moselle thrown in. The first rooms I had – sitting-room, bedroom and bath – with electric light and central heating included in the price, cost me no more than a hundred marks (£5) a month. Later, I took an unfurnished flat – up five flights, it is true, and by no means modern in its equipment, although it did boast a dank and windowless bathroom – at £48 a year.

In connection with this apartment I received – from an old French lady with whom I used to practise my French – one of those lessons in humanity which remain with one through life. To look after my flat I had engaged a buxom, red-cheeked young woman from the country. To make a long story short, she proved to be a thief. She pocketed the money I gave her to settle the weekly bills and when the local tradesmen descended on me in a body, clamouring to be paid, broke down and confessed that she had robbed me. I was extremely indignant and, calling on my French teacher for my lesson the same afternoon, told her the story.

My old Madame – I have forgotten her name, but she was a wise, kindly old lady, struggling to exist on the miserable pittance her French lessons brought in – heard me through to the end, then asked me what I intended to do. ‘Why, hand her over to the police, of course,’ I declared. ‘No one’s going to rob me.’ She shook her head. ‘No,’ she said, ‘you can’t do that. The girl has confessed – she will certainly be sent to prison. Under the system in this country, where the record of every citizen from the cradle to the grave is tabulated by the police, there is no future for a girl who has served a prison sentence. No one will employ her and she will be driven straight to prostitution. *Non, non, jeune homme, vous ne ferez pas cela!*’

I let Franziska go, but I never forgot that old Frenchwoman’s words. Long after, landing from America, I was delayed and exasperated by the Customs officer who examined my baggage and who, to my stupefaction, proved to be drunk. In a rage, I sent for the head man and told him I intended to report his subordinate. The chief Customs officer had to admit that my accusation was true: he said I was fully within my rights but

that, if reported to headquarters, the man, who was soon to retire after long service, would inevitably be dismissed and lose his pension – if I would leave the matter in his hands, he would deal faithfully with the culprit. With the memory of my old French lady's admonition in my mind, I acquiesced.

When the Versailles Treaty abolished the old Prussian Army, Berlin lost much of its character. In the days before the War, the gay tunics, the gleaming Pickelhauben and grey great-coats of the military, lent the city a note all its own. Sunday morning after church, especially, witnessed a colourful parade along Unter den Linden, with the be-eagled helmets of the Garde du Corps, Hussar busbies and Uhlan tchaptkas bobbing among the throng. When I first went to Berlin old Lorenz Adlon, who subsequently built the famous Adlon Hotel, was proprietor of Hiller's Restaurant, on Unter den Linden, a resort much favoured by officers of the crack regiments – it was said that many a subaltern, in moments of financial stress, would 'touch' the benevolent old gentleman for a loan. Before he opened the hotel, Adlon Senior sent his son, Louis, the present proprietor, on a world tour of the leading hotels of the world to pick up any new and interesting devices, in order that Europe's latest luxury hotel might be as up-to-date as possible.

The result was that the Adlon, when it opened its doors in 1908, was, in its general effect, well ahead of its time, which is more than can be said of some of the luxury hotels erected in London and New York since the War.

Now all the bright coats and variegated millinery of the old Prussian Army are laid up in mothballs, only to be taken out on the occasion of the military fêtes instituted by Germany's new masters. Moreover, Berlin has undergone a strange, and to me incomprehensible, shift of its amusement centre from the neighbourhood of Unter den Linden to the western suburbs of the Kurfürstendamm and Charlottenburg. It is as though, in London, Leicester Square had transported itself to the Cromwell Road, or in New York, Broadway had taken wings and landed itself on Upper Fifth Avenue.

When I knew Berlin, Unter den Linden, the Friedrich-Strasse and the streets adjoining were the bright lights sector



THE AUTHOR, COL. N. G. THWAITES, D.S.O., FREDERIC WILLIAM WILE AND ORVILLE WRIGHT,
BERLIN, 1908

of the city. Now, of an evening, Unter den Linden is comparatively dark and respectable: to find the dance-halls, the cafés, the theatres, you must go West, to the Tauentzien-Strasse, and particularly, to the Kurfürstendamm. In the days of my youth the Kurfürstendamm ended virtually in the country and much of it was given over to newly-erected and very luxurious apartment houses to which mainly the wealthy Jews were moving. In this quarter, hard by the Zoologischer Garten, was the Café des Westens, much frequented by the Bohemian element of the population, where Rupert Brooke in his Berlin days used to go in the afternoons. They had an excellent *cabaret intime* at the Café des Westens called '*Zum Siebenten Himmel*' (The Seventh Heaven) where in the small hours of the morning I would chat with the pianist, who was destined to find fame and fortune as a composer.

The pianist was Oscar Straus, who wrote *The Chocolate Soldier* and other highly successful comic operas.

Close by was the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis-Kirche, erected to the memory of the old Emperor William (der Greise Kaiser) by his grandson, whom the Berliners called 'der Reise-Kaiser', by reason of his fondness for travel. The spire was crowned with a star oddly perched on the tip of the lightning-conductor – probably the only extant instance of an asterisk being perpetuated in bronze. The story is that, when the plans were submitted to William II, he made a note on the margin referring to the spire, putting an asterisk above the spire to call attention to his note. When the plans were returned to the Court architect, the latter, in a spirit of unquestioning subservience intelligible only to those with a personal knowledge of the atmosphere surrounding the Kaiser, incorporated the asterisk in the building, under the impression that it was meant to be a star.

If the clumsy and over-elaborated style of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church is Roman, the star on the spire is, at least, in the pure Byzantine manner.

Probably the architect thought the asterisk was symbolical, like the star that shines from the Christmas tree in the first act of Channing Pollock's well-known play, *The Fool*. The play

treats of a clergyman in the slums of New York who tries to pattern his life on that of Our Lord with disastrous results and as the curtain to Act I, if I remember rightly, a star appears above the Christmas tree in the darkened parish hall to symbolise the cleric's divine mission. At the first performance of the play in Chicago a certain motion picture magnate approached the author in the first interval and said, 'Mr. Pollock, what's all this talk about a star in your play?' 'Why, it's the Star of Bethlehem,' replied the dramatist, 'you know, the star that appeared above the stable the night that Christ was born.' The film man shook his head dubiously, 'It'll want explaining to a lot of people in this country,' he declared.

I was never very happy in Berlin, partly on account of the strained Anglo-German situation, but also because, notwithstanding what the greybeards tell us, youth is not a very happy time. Nevertheless, I amused myself pretty well, playing lawn tennis, and swimming and sailing on the lovely lakes that surround the city in the summer, and skating in the winter. At one time I shared rooms with a charming fellow, the late Marqués de Casa Calderón, belonging to an old Peruvian family, who had been educated in England at Beaumont, and worked as an engineer in Herr Rathenau's great Berliner Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft. He and I would go 'bummeling' together and we had sundry amusing adventures in the dance-halls, both the expensive variety and the more humble sort.

Once, at a very old and famous dance saloon in the Eastern part of the city, we were caught in a police raid and in company with a number of lovely ladies, had to hide under tables until the police had departed. The place was called 'Das Alte Ballhaus', which I always thought meant 'The Old Ball (i.e. dance) House', until I took up tennis and began to interest myself on the history of this ancient game. When I read that in the eighteenth century there were scores of tennis courts in Berlin I remembered 'Das Alte Ballhaus' and, recalling its spacious proportions, long windows and high roof, realised that it must undoubtedly have been a disused *jeu de paume*.

I have always got on well with the Germans, even with the prisoners I used to examine in the War. I found them to be

a fundamentally honest, kindly people and immensely hospitable – I made many friends. Once or twice I was invited by a wasp-waisted and monocled Guards subaltern of my acquaintance to dine at the mess of the Second Regiment of Foot Guards at their barracks in the Friedrich-Strasse. It was one of the most celebrated of the Berlin regiments and one of its prized possessions was a black and white Prussian flag presented to the regiment when it left for the Franco-Prussian War, by the servant girls of Berlin. The regiment covered itself with glory at the battle of St. Privat and the walls of the ante-room were hung with photographs of officers slain on that day. Although the officers came from the most distinguished families of the old Prussian nobility – candidates for commissions had to show so many quarterings on their coats of arms – the Second Foot Guards was, like the Irish Guards, something of a poor man's regiment. In contradiction to the stories I had heard of the sybaritic luxury of the crack German regiments, the fare at the Second Foot Guards mess was exceedingly simple and if we drank champagne, it was of the native variety, at 3s. a bottle. Many of the officers I dined with were killed afterwards at Perthes, on the French front, in 1915, when the Prussian Guards Corps was practically decimated.

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CHAPTER X

STATESMEN, AND OTHERS, IN KITCAT

ONE of the masters of European diplomacy, at whose feet I learned much during my years in Berlin, was Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador. His more famous brother, Paul Cambon, for so many years French Ambassador to the Court of St. James's and one of the artisans of the Entente Cordiale, gave me a letter to him.

But Jules Cambon was hardly less distinguished. As Governor-General of Algeria and later as Ambassador at Washington and afterwards, Madrid, he had made his mark and his arrival in Berlin, as successor to the inconspicuous M. Bihourde, '*l'Épicier*', was generally interpreted as ushering in a much firmer line on the part of the French Government towards Germany.

In his rusty black broadcloth and ill-brushed bowler-hat, sporting almost the last pair of side-whiskers found in international diplomacy, Jules Cambon looked more like a French country doctor than an Ambassador. In his dealings with the Germans over a period of singular difficulty, owing to the German Government's repeated attempts to shatter the Entente Cordiale by sundry excursions into Morocco, he was tactful and circumspect, as was shown by his feat in securing the Emperor's presence at dinner at the beautiful French Embassy on the Pariser-Platz, the first time the monarch had been a guest there for many years. Cambon had the lucid French mind. Those sharp blue eyes of his, which could twinkle so maliciously, missed nothing; and his ear was ever close to the ground.

In the many talks we had together in his study at the Pariser-Platz, looking out upon those very steps where, in Prussia's re-

awakening after the catastrophe of Jena, the Berlin students sharpened their sabres in provocation of Napoleon, I received almost my first impression of the European scene as it presented itself to the career diplomatist of the pre-War era. As Jules Cambon saw it, I was aware of a system of delicate and constantly shifting forces closely interlocked, to be directed and controlled according to the particular interests of each individual State. He was an experienced and able diplomat, enlightened and honourable and as fair-minded as any Frenchman can be where France is the issue. But disinterested international co-operation such as Woodrow Wilson contemplated in founding the League of Nations was simply unintelligible to him, trained as he had been in a school in which the professional diplomat approached all international questions from the national rather than the international standpoint. His attitude towards the League, when in after years I used to call on him at the Paris Peace Conference, was one of faintly amused cynicism, less open but none the less real than the avowed incredulity of Clemenceau who once said, 'Every night, when I go to bed, I repeat to myself "I believe in the League of Nations".'

Cambon's enduring concern, during the years I knew him in Berlin, was for French security, his sole care to ensure that the balance of power was not depressed to the disadvantage of France. At the time French policy was firmly anchored to the entente with Britain which Jules Cambon, in intimate association with his brother in London, loyally supported. But I was conscious of the fact that, should the balance of power ever be displaced, should for example, the new Liberal Cabinet in London show itself less proof against German blandishments than its predecessor had been, that mercilessly analytical mind would inexorably set about finding new friends, new safeguards.

The French are less susceptible to humbug than any race I have ever had dealings with. They seem to have mastered the art of separating sentiment from reason, especially where their interests are concerned. The Germans never succeeded in hoodwinking Jules Cambon who, nevertheless, was far less of

a firebrand than, for instance, Delcassé, the famous French Foreign Minister and principal creator of the entente with England, or Barrère, Ambassador in Rome. Cambon took Prince Bülow's measure from the first; of him he once remarked to me in his dry way, 'The man is such a colossal liar that one cannot believe even the opposite of what he says!'

His firm hand and discerning eye helped to steer French policy through the recurrent storms of the Morocco question. One of Edward VII's first aims on coming to the throne had been to arrive at an understanding with France, an aim in which he was loyally supported by Delcassé and the French diplomatists of the Delcassé school, the two Cambons, and Barrère, in Rome. The resultant Anglo-French agreement of 1902 gave the French a free hand in Morocco, where their interests were all-important owing to its proximity to their North African possessions, in return for which France gave Great Britain a free hand in Egypt. Germany was never very happy about the Entente Cordiale, the inevitable outcome, as it was, of the instability of German foreign policy since William II's accession; but it was not until Russia, France's ally, was involved in the Russo-Japanese war, which broke out in January 1904, that Prince Bülow made any serious attempt to split it.

Accordingly, in March 1905, with a view to asserting Germany's equality of rights with other Powers in Morocco, the Kaiser paid a visit to Tangier, assuring the Sultan's representative who received him that Morocco was to be regarded as an entirely independent country. Basing herself upon the Treaty of Madrid of 1880, guaranteeing equality of treatment to all foreigners in Morocco, Germany insisted on a conference of all the signatories of the Madrid treaty being summoned. Delcassé was all for calling the German bluff and resisting the idea of a conference even at the risk of war. But the French Army was not ready and Rouvier, the French Prime Minister, sacrificed his colleague.

Delcassé resigned. It was a notable triumph for German diplomacy, but it did not last long. The conference duly met at Algeciras, but the sense of the meeting was against Germany,

even to her ally in the Triple Alliance, Italy, and she had to submit to a decision against her. But Prince Bülow did not give up. In 1908 an incident at Casablanca brought Europe to the verge of war again. Some deserters from the French Foreign Legion, who were helped by the German Consul at Casablanca to escape, were seized by force from the Consul's custody by the French authorities. Germany took a high hand and demanded an apology and for a while, the situation was tense. Jules Cambon said to me afterwards, speaking of Bülow's attitude in the Casablanca affair, 'Bismarck would have been branded a criminal lunatic for taking such an appalling risk.' Ultimately, the incident was referred for arbitration to the Hague Court which delivered a Solomon-like judgment, dividing the blame more or less equally between the parties concerned.

Once he knew that he could trust me, Cambon would speak to me with great frankness. On the day on which the *Daily Telegraph* published the famous interview with the German Emperor, I met Cambon in the Wilhelm-Strasse and gave him the first news of it. When absorbed in conversation he had an absent-minded trick of poking his finger into one's waistcoat opening and boring. Boring briskly now he exclaimed blinking his eyes at me with a startled air, '*Mais il est donc vraiment fou, cet homme-là!*' Once at the height of one of the Moroccan crises we stood together at his study window, looking out on the busy traffic of the Pariser-Platz. Pointing at the stately pile of the Hotel Adlon opposite and the glittering array of shops along Unter den Linden beyond, he said prophetically, 'If war should come you will see, all this will crumble!'

One of the oldest as it was one of the most exclusive of Berlin restaurants in my day was Borchardt's, much frequented by high government officials and leading generals. I went in there to supper after the theatre once on the night of the Emperor's birthday and perceived no fewer than five Field-Marshal's bâtons hanging up like so many umbrellas on the line of hooks where the men deposited their hats and coats. I discovered that the Field-Marshal's had come on to Borchardt's to wind up

a festive evening spent as guests at one of the Kaiser's 'stag' parties in the beer cellar he had installed at the Berlin Schloss.

One of the regular patrons of Borchardt's was von Holstein, the famous 'Black Excellency' of the Foreign Office: I used to see him dining alone there. The Bülow and other memoirs have dealt at length with this crabbed individual, the maker and breaker of Chancellors, who, though no more than a departmental chief, was for years the power behind the scenes at the Wilhelm-Strasse until Bülow, whom he had made, brought about his downfall. Holstein took a notable revenge, not only on the Chancellor, but also on the Emperor, who had acquiesced in his going. He is generally believed to have furnished the pamphleteer, Maximilian Harden, with the bulk of his material for his attacks in his weekly *Die Zukunft* on the Emperor and the Camarilla, headed by Prince Eulenburg, Holstein's arch-enemy, who was driven into disgrace and exile as the result.

Holstein, a bachelor, lived like a hermit in a humble and obscure apartment, seeing few people outside of his colleagues at the Foreign Office with the exception of an elderly woman friend, who maintained one of the last of the political salons in Berlin. I never actually met him and he kept his activities so dark that, during my time in Berlin, to me he was little more than a name. But Dr. Hammann, the head of the Press Bureau of the Foreign Office, was his creature, and Holstein assiduously used the government machinery for controlling the Press to launch his insidious attacks upon those whom he had vowed to destruction. The bulk of the Reuter news service from Berlin was made by the Wolff Bureau, the official news agency, which was wholly under the thumb of the Foreign Office: my job was to supplement this service, but also to see that it was not made use of to disseminate hidden German propaganda. As a matter of routine I called at the Foreign Office several times a week to ascertain the government attitude on current political questions, and I have little doubt, in retrospect, that at one time or other I was unwittingly pressed into service, as the correspondent of the world-wide



M. JULES CAMBON

Reuter service, to further various machinations, Holstein's among the rest.

The spirit of Bismarck, who inhabited for so many years the old-fashioned Reichskanzler Palais next door – Hitler lives there now – seemed to hover over the low and shabby building in the Wilhelm-Strasse, where the Foreign Office was housed. A ring at the brass bell-pull produced a grave and bearded retainer, always in evening-dress with the Franco-Prussian war medal on his lapel, who would usher the caller into the waiting-room, a dreary apartment with matting on the floor and provided with a water-bottle and a glass, a line of reference books and a file of the *Journal des Débats* (why the *Journal des Débats*, unless that it used to be one of the duller newspapers in the world?)

Continental bureaucracy has, or used to have, an odour all its own, a sad, sour smell that always seemed to me to be compounded of ink, dust and sealing-wax in equal parts. I have sniffed it at the Wilhelm-Strasse, in Paris, along the labyrinthine corridors of such hoary edifices as the Ministry of War in the rue St. Dominique, at the Ball-Platz in Vienna, under the brightly-gilded dome of the St. Petersburg Admiralty. I caught a whiff of it at a Ministry in Lisbon the other day and it brought back to me, not only the hours of waiting I have spent in such cheerless places, but also a whole generation of bureaucrats I have met, pathetic figures cut from a pattern, with their shiny 'office' coats and paper-protected cuffs, trying to make a show on their miserable salaries (with a decoration at the New Year to flatter their pride in place of a much-needed raise in their wages to fill their children's bellies).

There is a fascinating history to be written of the German Press Bureau, if Herr Hitler would only open the files. With the exception of the Social Democratic newspapers, the Foreign Office exercised a direct influence over practically the entire range of the German Press. This control it exerted in a number of different ways – through the so-called semi-official newspapers which for circulation purposes were glad to allow themselves to be used for reflecting the government attitude,

through subtle bribery either with news, or with decorations or jobs for the proprietors, or through pressure, direct or indirect, in which government advertising played a certain part.

If the Chancellor wished to sway the Emperor towards or away from a certain course, the word went downstairs to the Press Department and hey presto, the campaign started and presently a whole series of newspaper articles, all sounding the same note, would begin to appear in the daily selection of clippings pasted on sheets and forwarded to His Majesty – the system was particularly effective when it was desired to undermine the position of some ambassador or minister who found increasing favour in the Imperial eyes. A foreign power had to be impressed by a display of German public opinion, a foreign statesman assailed – the same procedure. But, owing to the fact that the Chancellor was unable to exercise adequate personal supervision over the activities of the Press Bureau, being compelled to delegate to his subordinates the direct contact with the Press, unscrupulous subaltern officials were able to have inserted insidious attacks on their own colleagues, as von Holstein frequently did. No wonder Bülow said, 'Die Politik verdirbt das Moral' (politics ruins the morals). He knew; and he was right.

Those dusty dossiers of the Wilhelm-Strasse would disclose a rare record of perfidy.

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At the Court of Berlin, the Russians enjoyed a particularly privileged place. William II had continued his grandfather's custom of having the Russian military attaché in Berlin especially attached to his person as A.D.C., the German military attaché in St. Petersburg holding the same position in relation to the Tsar, Nicholas II. The Kaiser made the fostering of friendly relations between the two countries his especial concern: in the same way as he considered himself the chief military adviser of 'Grandmamma Victoria', so his pleasure was to pose as guide, philosopher and friend to the young Tsar.

My 'source' at the Russian Embassy was the First Secretary, Vassily Kroupenski, a bachelor, fashionable, cynical and sophisticated, who reminded me alternately of the hero of

Tolstoi's *Resurrection* and of a Roman aristocrat in the days of Horace. He was the type of man who could have been produced only by the Russia of the Grand Dukes, a type which, in the nature of things, has now utterly disappeared from international diplomacy and, through his eyes, I had many a glimpse of the Court and diplomatic life of St. Petersburg. The Ambassador, Count von Osten-Sacken, was an aged diplomatist who left the bulk of the Embassy work to the Counsellor, de Boulatzel, reputed to be one of the best bridge players in Europe, and Kroupenski. I was useful to Kroupenski, as I sometimes brought him news, and from time to time we would dine or go to the Opera together.

I remember one occasion on which he was particularly grateful for a small service I did him in this respect. I received an early tip that the Grand Duke Serge had been assassinated at St. Petersburg and, realising the sensation the murder would create at the German Court, I hopped into a cab and raced off to the Russian Embassy with the news. I saw Kroupenski in his room at the Chancery and was leaving the Embassy when, swinging back the porte cochère that opened on Unter den Linden, I found myself face to face with the Kaiser.

His Majesty had come post-haste to offer his condolences in person to the Ambassador. Kroupenski told me afterwards that his chief was delighted to have had early news of the tragedy, as the Kaiser, in his rather childish way, loved to demonstrate the superiority of his own intelligence service over that of the Embassy: but for my visit the old Ambassador would have learnt the news first from the Emperor's lips. As it was, he was prepared – but it was a near thing.

Kroupenski occupied a suite of rooms on the top floor of the Embassy, furnished with incredible magnificence mainly with loot from the Summer Palace at Peking which, he told me, he had bought from the Cossacks for a handful of roubles or a few bottles of vodka – he was at the Russian Legation during the Boxer siege, I have rarely seen such treasures – wonderful old Chinese lacquer, exquisite embroideries, great ceremonial lanterns, jade images, diamond studded clocks. Later on, Kroupenski returned to China as Russian Minister to Peking

and was there submerged in the flood of the Russian Revolution. I never heard what became of him, but I think he died.

Elie Mercadier, the famous diplomatic correspondent of the Agence Havas and an old friend of my father's Paris days – as a Papal Zouave he took part in the defence of Rome in 1870 when the Italian Government forces, entering through the breach at the Porta Pia, defended by the Papal troops, laid low the temporal power of the Papacy for more than half a century – gave me once a shrewd piece of advice. 'Know everybody in diplomacy,' he said, 'but cultivate in particular the smaller legations. They have the same news as the big Embassies, but they are easier to handle.' This excellent counsel stood me in good stead throughout my newspaper career. In Vienna, for example, during the Balkan War of 1912, I became friends with the secretary of one of the minor legations, an extremely intelligent and astute observer, who kept me posted during my stay with extraordinarily accurate forecasts of every move of the Austro-Hungarian Office.

At the Hague Peace Conference of 1907, there was a curious incident involving one of the smaller delegations. The Russian Revolution of 1905, though savagely suppressed, was still seething beneath the surface in Russia and the chief Russian delegate at The Hague, an elderly nonentity called de Nélidoff, never put foot outside his hotel without a secret service man at his heels. The Russian secret police unearthed the fact that one of the secretaries of the Cuban Delegation had, in his extreme adolescence, been sentenced *in contumaciam* as an anarchist at Naples, and the Russian Delegation promptly demanded his expulsion. The secretary, accordingly, withdrew. I went to see him before he left, a pleasant-mannered, good-looking young man who insisted on my smoking the largest Havana cigar I had ever seen, an act of hospitality which made me feel extremely ill before the interview was over.

That young man rose to become Foreign Secretary of Cuba under President Machado and, when Machado was overthrown a few years ago, accompanied the fallen President on his dramatic flight to the United States.

Old W. T. Stead, that great journalist, later to be drowned in the *Titanic*, founder of the *Review of Reviews* which 'Jacky' Fisher used to call 'the magazine rifle', was an outstanding figure at the Hague Conference, where he ran a daily newspaper in French and English called *Le Courrier de la Conférence*. Stead was not an easy man to score off, but a Spanish journalist, Leopoldo Romeo, a bearded and extravagant figure, since dead, who at that time represented the *Daily Telegraph* in Madrid, once put him very neatly in his place. Romeo knew no English, and his dispatches to the D.T. had to be translated from Spanish in the London office. One day, in the restaurant of the Hôtel des Indes where most of the delegates were quartered, Stead remarked chaffingly to Romeo in my presence, 'Why on earth does the *Daily Telegraph* keep as correspondent in Madrid a man who doesn't know a word of English?' With great good humour Romeo beckoned the head waiter to our table. 'How many languages do you speak my friend?' he asked in his really terrible French. 'Five, monsieur,' was the reply. 'And how much do you earn here?' 'Seven pounds a week!' With a magnificent gesture the Spaniard turned to Stead. '*Voilà pourquoi je ne parle pas l'anglais!*' he cried.

I should like to be able to write with more intimacy about Stead, one of the greatest journalists the nineteenth century produced. But he was of the Fleet Street generation ahead of mine: I never knew him in his heyday, when he edited *The Pall Mall Gazette* and threw his hat in the ring with his 'Maiden Tribute' campaign, his championship of Cecil Rhodes and an all-British South Africa, and of a Bigger Navy. He was getting on in years when I met him at The Hague, but for all the silver in his beard, his voice still had a stirring ring and his energy was as volcanic as ever. He ran his little Conference sheet with tremendous verve which, seeing that his French was appalling (French was the almost universal language of the Conference) was something of a feat—the only tense he knew in French was the infinitive, he used to tell us laughingly.

At one of the official receptions he showed me a journalistic

trick which has stuck in my memory. He was handing in his hat and coat at the cloakroom when I arrived and I noticed that he glanced at the ticket the attendant gave him. 'Quite a crowd!' he remarked. 'There are more than 300 people here already.' 'How do you know that?' I asked him. He showed me his cloakroom ticket.

The number was 312.

A year later he was dead. His range of interest in life was as wide as the vast Atlantic which covers his bones. A Titan of the Press, he met his death in the fitly named *Titanic*, defying fate as he had so often done. She was the greatest ship of her time, and it was her maiden voyage – old W.T. was sensational to the last. His memory brings to my mind a phrase on the New York Memorial to the victims of the *Maine*: 'In life undaunted, in death unafraid.'

Although, as already pointed out, the British and French Ambassadors in Berlin agreed in their estimate of Prince Bülow's trustworthiness and, even by his fellow-countrymen among the newspaper men in Berlin, he was regarded as a good deal of a humbug, the Chancellor, round as a ball, with his sleek air and rubicund, contented face, was the most charming person to meet. On his own showing (in his notorious *Memoirs*) he was at heart a frigid and calculating Junker, bent only on advancing his own career and incidentally the fortunes of the great Mecklenburg house of Bülow, of which he was originally a rather lowly member, but outwardly he was one of the few attractive personalities in German public life. For one thing, he was a man of the world, well-groomed and with easy manners, which was more than could be said of most of his colleagues, notably his successor in the Chancellorship, the awkward and uninspired, if well-meaning, Herr von Bethmann Hollweg, author of the celebrated phrase about 'the scrap of paper'.

Bülow had something of Stanley Baldwin's imperturbability in a scrape. Not a great orator but an admirable speaker, with the grand seigneur's contempt for the rather pathetic talking-shop which was all the Reichstag really was,

he could talk himself out of anything. He had a well-stocked mind and a knack of felicitous quotation made him a gift to the cartoonists. Indeed, he added a whole string of catchwords to the existing vocabulary of statesmanship: 'Germany's place in the sun', for example, to mention but one of these, was a phrase of his coining. I interviewed him once, on which occasion he delivered himself of a number of platitudes about Anglo-German relations in which, I fancy, he believed as little as I. I was more interested in the fact that the wall beside the desk in his workroom at the Reichskanzler Palais was hung with picture postcards, framed, which the Emperor had addressed to him from one or other of his innumerable voyages.

For the whole decade between 1904 and the outbreak of the World War we lived in the ominous atmosphere of the impending catastrophe. Anglo-German relations see-sawed between over-friendliness and friction. The political Cassandras who prophesied that a conflict was inevitable because Germany or Great Britain, according to the nationality of the prophet, was arming for this and no other purpose, were entitled to congratulate themselves upon their prescience when the guns went off; but it has always appeared to me that the War broke out because the final decision escaped from the hands of the more civilised Powers into the hands of those relics of eighteenth-century Cabinet diplomacy, Austria-Hungary and Russia. The fact that the Great General Staff in Germany was glad to seize the opportunity of settling with France and Russia before they became any stronger may have precipitated events: it was not the original cause. Neither France nor Great Britain wanted, nor, indeed, was adequately prepared for war; but over a period of years the combination of William II's instability and Prince Bülow's trickiness had jangled nerves on the side of the Entente Powers to such an extent that their capacity for handling the sudden Austro-Serbian crisis calmly, judicially and above all, swiftly, was impaired.

Diplomacy to-day is abreast of the real needs of the nations, commercial as well as political, at any rate far more abreast of them than it was in the period of which I write. It uses

modern men, modern methods. In that fatal decade before the War the roots of the relations between the Powers extended far back into the past, back to the Congress of Berlin and even the Congress of Vienna beyond it. The ancient, clumsy machinery clanked and creaked prodigiously when the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand set it in motion, and before it was fairly started, the Austrian shells were already screaming into Belgrade.

Since the rise of the European dictatorships the outbreak of a European war has appeared to be much nearer than it was at any time during the decade of which I write. But before 1914 the fate of the nations was much more definitely in the hands of the governments than it is to-day. We have not yet arrived at Woodrow Wilson's ideal of 'open covenants, openly arrived at', and we probably never shall. But democracy, its mind steeped in bitter memories of those four years of bloodshed, is everywhere on the watch and will see to it that it is kept informed, step by step, of such fateful and irrevocable decisions as those taken by the old diplomacy, more or less *in camerâ*, in the late summer of 1914, as I believe even the dictators will discover, when a real war crisis arises.

The public memory is notoriously short and most people have forgotten that, on the morning of August 5, 1914, when the British Empire and Germany were actually at war, as the most casual glance at any morning paper would have shown, bands of intending travellers arrived at the London Continental termini bound for a summer holiday in Germany and were most indignant on discovering that all services to the Continent had been cancelled. There is one point on which the majority of English books, memoirs and fiction, are curiously in accord and that is that the outbreak of war came upon many English people like a thunderclap. Downing Street and Fleet Street knew that the last chances of keeping the peace were evaporating, almost hour by hour, like snow in the sun; but the bulk of the nation was ignorant, because it was not interested. It did not know what was going on, because it was not curious to know what was going on. This was partly due to the fact that, for so many years,

since the turn of the century, at least, foreign affairs had been excluded from the domain of party politics, by common agreement between the parties in Parliament.

For these reasons and in the light of subsequent events the menace to peace in that last decade before the War was probably more real even than it is to-day. Anglo-German relations blew, now hot, now cold; and their current temperature was very accurately reflected in the nature of the reception accorded to British callers at the Wilhelm-Strasse. It must be said for Germany that she was struggling to keep a ring from closing in on her. It is true that the ring was of her own forging, the inevitable outcome of the instability of policy which followed Bismarck's dismissal. Austria-Hungary was Germany's only friend, for the Triple Alliance, as was evident years before the outbreak of 1914, was a hollow shell due to cave in the moment Italy's inevitable defection should occur. Germany was virtually isolated. Years of sabre-rattling on the part of William II and the echo his vain-glorious speeches found in the mouths of the yes-men who succeeded Bismarck, had driven Great Britain and France into one another's arms, while Germany's championship of the Habsburg monarchy's expansionist schemes in the Near East had thoroughly frightened Russia and led her, by way of her alliance with France, into the Entente fold.

These were bedrock facts, against which all attempts, some practical, others the reverse, to put Anglo-German relations on a basis of durable friendship, were inexorably shipwrecked. The tomtom beating of the Navy Leaguers and the Pan-Germans on the one side, of the Big Navy party and the jingoes on the other, alternated with efforts, not always very timely, of the various pacifist organisations and friendship societies to foster a friendlier feeling between the two peoples. There were exchanges of visits, banquets and junketings of all kinds and I attended, both in Berlin and in London, many love feasts of this description, where the wine and the oratory flowed in equal measure; but invariably, thereafter, someone would drop a brick. The Emperor would spout, a British Admiral (retired since the bombardment of Alexandria, but

who minded about that?) would write an article, demanding the immediate destruction of the German Fleet, Lord Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* or Mr. Leo Maxse's *National Review* would come bobbing up with some disclosure, the more unwelcome in that it frequently happened to be true, and we were back where we started from. When I next went to the Foreign Office Legationsrat Esternaux, the otherwise mild-mannered functionary who usually received me, one of the human phonographs reproducing the Foreign Office voice, would greet me with a sternly forbidding air, his brown beard bristling, his tone tremulous with indignation, as, with portentous solemnity but also much brio, he reeled off his set piece.

One distinctly ludicrous episode of the friendship overtures was the visit to Germany of a deputation of the British Press. With characteristic canniness the *Daily Mail* stood aside from what impressed even my youthful mind as a singularly undignified proceeding, and the *Morning Post* and one or two other newspapers followed suit. The culminating point of the visit was to be an audience of the Emperor and there was, I remember, bitter wrangling among the delegates as to the order of precedence at this function, which ended in at least one of them returning to London in high dudgeon without waiting for the audience. The great day arrived: the gentlemen of the British Press in top-hats and frock-coats were grouped expectantly on the terrace at Potsdam where, they were informed, His Majesty would receive them. The sound of hoofs and the Supreme War Lord came prancing. He was in uniform, on horseback and the bewildered journalists had no choice but to make their bows and murmur their respects to the sovereign enthroned in the saddle above them, an arrangement that stressed, as it was probably meant to, the hat-in-hand aspect of the whole of this most unfortunate jaunt.

About this time a burly gentleman with a remarkably square jaw, who up to a few weeks before might have been seen in naval officer's uniform on the quarter-deck of one of His Majesty's ships of war, opened a small office in that singu-

larly drab London thoroughfare, the Vauxhall Bridge Road. This was the British Admiralty's very belated rejoinder to the German secret service which was flooding our naval bases and seaports with spies to pry out the British Navy's secrets. Operating at first with strictly limited means but a highly expert, if small, personnel, that obscure office was soon keeping a sharp eye on every detail of German naval construction. Out of it grew the brilliant and widely ramified intelligence service which scored such notable triumphs in the War, still under the direction of the burly gentleman with the square jaw, known to history, if mysteriously, with admiration and affection, as 'C'.

All through the closing decade, as far as Anglo-German relations were concerned, we were sitting on the lid. What forces were pent up there is shown by the unparalleled explosion of anger and hatred which broke out in England and Germany alike after the fateful declaration of the Fourth of August, 1914.

CHAPTER XI

NORTHCLIFFE

FREDERIC WILLIAM WILE was Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Mail* while I was there. A Chicagoan and an old *Chicago Daily News* man in the Victor Lawson era, he infused a vigorous breath from the Windy City into his work. Lord Northcliffe, as it can hardly be necessary to explain, was the foremost champion of the school of thought, of which Lord Roberts and Mr. Leo Maxse were the principal mouthpieces, which believed that Germany was secretly preparing to attack Great Britain; the job of *Daily Mail* correspondent in Berlin was, therefore, no sinecure. The action of the *Daily Mail* in having an American as its correspondent in Berlin was often criticised, in England as well as in Germany, but I have always believed that Fred Wile's citizenship protected him from retaliatory measures which the German Government might have been disposed to take against a British subject.

For, always courageous and outspoken, he was often in hot water with the authorities. He remained at his post right up to England's declaration of war against Germany when official rancour found its expression against him and he was arrested. As he was being led away from the Hotel Adlon, where he was temporarily staying, a senior member of the staff, one who had received from him many favours, in an access of patriotism, banged him over the head with a tea-tray, an incident of which Fred, who has a delightful sense of humour, saw only the funny side. Now that he is one of the best-known radio commentators in America, broadcasting from coast to coast a weekly survey of the situation in Washington, he must often look back and smile over the *Sturm und Drang* of the old Berlin days.

Wile thought that at twenty-six I possessed a quality of

youthful enthusiasm that would appeal to Lord Northcliffe. My five years in Berlin had widened my horizon, but I was increasingly oppressed by the feeling that the German capital stood aside from the great European routes. I feared I should get into a definite rut, unless I made a change. An introduction to Northcliffe was arranged and he offered me the post of *Daily Mail* correspondent in Paris.

My father, who was of the old school, had always impressed upon me the fact that an adequate acquaintance with the French language and the French scene was indispensable for anyone with any pretence to be considered a gentleman. I left school with a fair knowledge of French, but I lacked fluency in speaking, and I was conscious of my woeful ignorance of everything appertaining to French politics. I had been brought up to regard Reuter's very much as a family concern and I was reluctant to sever the connection; but they had no other post to offer me. I accepted Lord Northcliffe's offer, much against my father's will. Brought up in the tradition of *The Times* and the old *Standard* like most of the newspaper men of his generation, he regarded the *Daily Mail* as a parvenu and an interloper. Certain famous blunders, such as the false report of the massacre of the Peking legations by the Boxers, stuck in his throat—he was filled with distrust of Northcliffe, the *Daily Mail*, and all his works.

But I was strongly attracted to Northcliffe. Paradoxically enough, in view of my father's attitude towards him, I liked him for the very qualities I most admired in my father. I found a man who was heart and soul a journalist and, what is more, proud to be a journalist, with a tremendous fund of general knowledge and a well-stored mind—Northcliffe was much better read than many people knew and anything he wrote, particularly his leading articles, was vigorous, felicitously phrased and trenchant: he also reminded me of my father in the savage suspicion he always manifested of anything tending to curb the freedom of the Press. On other grounds, I felt that Northcliffe, then at the height of his powers, opened the door of opportunity to every young aspirant worthy of his salt, besides, the terms he offered were of a nature to attract

any young man who, like myself, was anxious to marry and settle down. So I jumped at his offer and in January 1910, in the midst of the Paris floods, I started work in Paris.

I did not expect my association with Northcliffe to last indefinitely. Even after our first meeting I was subconsciously aware that I was not likely in the long run to be capable of the blind submission which 'the Chief' exacted from his subordinates, that sooner or later there would be a breach between us. The breach came all right, though after the lapse of twelve years, years that for me were filled with action, adventure and colour, and the last time I set my eyes on him in life, he was rating me soundly, a very angry man. But I retained my feeling of affection for him to the end, and retain it still. The fact that he made me a princely gift when I resigned, and also that I was one of the twenty friends he remembered with a personal legacy in his will – a kind thought that touched me profoundly – suggest to me that, our parting notwithstanding, the feeling was reciprocated.

My chief memories of Northcliffe centre about the World War. The outbreak of hostilities found me in charge of the *Daily Mail* diplomatic news in London. I covered the Foreign Office, and the embassies and legations: with the foreign news service, which was the Foreign Editor's job, I had nothing to do. But towards the end of July Northcliffe sent for me. 'War's coming,' he said. 'How would you handle our war service?' 'Well,' I answered promptly, for it was a matter to which I had given some thought, 'when war breaks out, all communications will be cut – they always are. If we want the news, we shall have to fetch it.'

Northcliffe, stretched full length on the couch in his office at *The Times*, drew on his cigar. 'Couriers, do you mean?'

'That's the idea, Chief!'

He nodded. 'You're right, my boy. Go and do it. You're in charge.'

Within twenty-four hours I had more than a dozen couriers travelling between Carmelite House and the Continent.

Although at first he was minded to oppose the dispatch of the British Expeditionary Force, as Tom Clarke disclosed in

his *Northcliffe Diary* (I was present at the conference at which Northcliffe made his outburst), it was no more than a momentary whim and very soon he threw himself heart and soul into the prosecution of the War. But the Cabinet distrusted him: his attack on Haldane rankled and Mr. Asquith had not forgotten the many savage onslaughts delivered against him by the Northcliffe Press since the Liberal Party had come into power. Northcliffe asked nothing better than to place the whole service of his newspapers at the disposal of the Government and in those days, before the ineffectiveness of the Government was revealed, would have gladly taken an office, even a humble one, where his shrewd brain and tremendous drive could have been made use of to help win the War. But he was snubbed and thwarted at every turn until, through the sheer ineptitude of the War Cabinet, he was thrust into the thankless rôle of critic. When, in February 1915, a conversation I had with Sir John French, then on leave from the front, revealed to me the fact that the British guns in Flanders were being starved for high explosive, it seemed natural to me to lay the facts before Northcliffe and introduce him to French, whom he had never met. At the Field-Marshal's invitation I took Northcliffe to lunch at 94 Lancaster Gate, French's town house, and left the two together.

This meeting was actually the origin of the *Daily Mail's* famous attack on Lord Kitchener, which I shall deal with more fully in its proper place.

There is a certain quality about people who have found fame and success in youth that is definitely pleasing. A sort of aura surrounds them, they seem to walk on air – I have noticed it in young men who have made their names in finance or in the theatre, in young women who have shot to stardom on the stage or the screen. Northcliffe possessed this quality in a very marked degree. Maybe, I am putting the cause after the effect: maybe, in Northcliffe's case, the personal magnetism he radiated, so that he could charm people at will (he did not always will) was, in part, the secret of his astonishing early success.

The late Louis Tracy, the novelist, was associated with

Northcliffe, Northcliffe's brother Harold (now Lord Rothermere), and the late Kennedy Jones in the purchase of the *Evening News*, which venture was to pave the way for the foundation of the *Daily Mail*. The purchase completed Harold carried the partners off to the National Liberal Club for dinner. They were in high spirits, as Tracy told me the story, predicting the brilliant future to which their enterprise would surely conduct them. They would stand for Parliament, they declared, preferably in London constituencies, and a successful parliamentary career might lead, who knows? to the peerage. 'Let's draw and see who'll be the first peer,' Harold cried and broke three matches in two. 'The whole match gets it!'

To Louis Tracy fell the winner. He was the only one of the four who failed to find fame and fortune as the result of the venture. He parted from Northcliffe soon afterwards and was glad to receive for his share in the *Evening News* a few hundred pounds, in place of the many thousands the other three were destined to draw from the paper in the course of the years.

Northcliffe was a supremely great newspaper man. Admittedly, he based himself on Joseph Pulitzer, the founder of the *New York World*, for whom he had the greatest admiration – I believe, on one of his visits to New York in his early days, he once edited the old *World* for a day – and Pulitzer's aphorisms were continually on his lips. He knew all the tricks of the newspaper business. He was thoroughly versed in the workings of the British middle-class and lower-middle-class mind. He was fond of saying: 'Never attack an institution! Attack the fellow at the head of it!' He rarely flouted public opinion: if he launched a campaign you might be sure he had previously satisfied himself that there was a reasonable body of the public in favour of it. The more credit to his courage in attacking Kitchener in an onslaught so unexpected, so horrific, that it literally took the nation's breath away. I should like to have seen how he would have handled the American newspaper publicity concerning Edward VIII's romance. Somehow, I feel sure the silence of the British Press would have been repugnant to him.



LORD NORTHCLIFFE, ST. DUNSTAN'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET

He was his own worst enemy, but he was also abundantly misunderstood. He could be cruelly unjust and unkind, and a certain malicious streak in his nature encouraged the tattle-bearers and parasites who always surround a man of his stamp. I saw much of him at one time and he left me with the impression that, conscious of the array of yes-men about him, he liked to test men out for himself, that behind his explosions of anger, however genuine, was often the desire to discover whether a man would stand up to him, even at the risk of his job, whether his victim could 'take it', as they say in America.

He was capable of actions revealing the broadest humanity, and he had the softest heart. I made several trips to the front with him in the early part of the War, once over the battlefield of the Marne a few weeks after the battle. The destruction wrought by the retreating German armies, the authentic atrocity stories we heard, the execution of the Mayor of Senlis, for instance, filled him with anger. 'Horrible, horrible people,' he would exclaim. 'I've resolved never to speak to a German again as long as I live. And I have German relatives, Valentine, German relatives, my boy!'

Well, in the course of our trip we visited the Trianon Palace Hotel at Versailles, transformed into a hospital. The place was full of German wounded from the Marne. Many had lain out for days, and gangrene was rampant. We went round the wards together and I spoke German with some of the prisoners. Presently, I missed Northcliffe. I found him going from bed to bed, distributing to the wounded the enormous cigarettes he smoked (they cost him fourpence each in Cairo). 'The poor fellows,' he exclaimed. 'Dreadful, dreadful!'

Some of the worst gangrene cases could not be kept indoors – they were lodged in tents in the garden. One of the doctors asked me if I would go and talk to a dying German in one of the tents: he knew no English and nobody at the hospital spoke German; they wanted to know whether he had any last wishes. It was a bearded Landwehrmann, a farmer from Hanover, and he was obviously at the point of death. I found him irreconcilably hostile. He was a bachelor, he told me, gazing up at me with lustreless, implacable eyes, with not a relative in the

world. The only thing he cared about was his farm, and that he had had to abandon to rack and ruin 'because Germany's enemies had attacked her'. Then suddenly someone sat down beside me on the bed, in that tent that already reeked of the grave. It was Northcliffe. He took the farmer's hand and pressed it, and I saw that the tears were running down his face.

In my young days in journalism Jules Hedeman, of the *Matin*, was one of the best journalists in Europe. A Dutch Jew by birth, afterwards naturalised French, he was at one time private secretary to Yves Guyot, a French apostle of Free Trade, then *Matin* correspondent in London, and eventually rose to be Foreign Editor of this great French newspaper, whose foreign news service, under his direction, became the most efficient in France. The familiar of Prime Ministers and Ambassadors, he was a power to reckon with in the newspaper world of Paris: for those who are interested in such things he told me, in 1913, that he was the most highly-paid journalist in France.

His salary was the equivalent of £1,500 a year.

Jules Hedeman and I were old friends. I saw him almost every night when I was working in Paris and we often went to the races together. He was busy, important, successful. But in the hectic period leading up to the outbreak of the World War he made a fatal blunder. He backed the wrong horse. He went to Berlin for the *Matin* and reported, up to the last moment, that Germany was working for peace, that Germany would not fight.

Like every other successful man, Hedeman had his enemies. When he returned to Paris, with the din of the war he had refused to believe possible all about him, the story was spread about that he had been 'got at' by the Germans. The Ministry of War acted swiftly. Hedeman was promptly mobilised as an infantry man and disappeared into the fog of war.

One day early in 1915 I was lunching with Lord Esher in Paris, at the Hôtel Meurice, where Jules Hedeman had always lived, when, to my surprise, I saw a figure in horizon

blue waving to me. To my surprise it was my friend Hedeman. We had a brandy together afterwards. He was wearing a corporal's chevrons. He said, '*Cher ami*, I am a corporal at the remount dépôt at the Camp at Châlons, and for the first time in my life I've found peace. This old existence of mine,' – and his cigar described an arc to take in the crowded lounge where we sat – 'no longer has any attraction for me. I groom my horses, I eat my stew from my pannikin and enjoy it and smoke my pipe – this cigar is the first I've had for months and somebody gave it to me. Paris, politics, pretty women, good food, they have no meaning for me now. I serve France and I am content.'

I never saw Jules Hedeman again. A year after our meeting he volunteered for active service and the next I heard of him he had been killed as a sergeant in front of Verdun.

By then I was in the army myself, waiting to return to the front. Northcliffe had known Hedeman well and the next time I was in London on leave I went round to *The Times* and asked him whether he had heard the news. He nodded sorrowfully. 'Yes, they told me,' he said with a deep sigh. 'Poor Hedeman! And to think I went round telling everybody he was a German spy. I feel so ashamed of myself.'

The real Northcliffe spoke there. He was often so much bigger than his critics. If we thought the situation warranted it, none of us who were, or had been, his 'young men', hesitated to act against his orders. Thomas Marlowe, the famous 'T.M.' of the *Daily Mail* and one of the best editors Fleet Street ever had, on more than one important occasion, when the news situation unexpectedly changed, did not think twice about using his own judgment and deliberately throwing out matter which the Chief had ordered to appear and in some cases, had written himself – Northcliffe used to grumble jokingly that he was the only man in London who could never be sure of getting a story published in the *Daily Mail*. But we had to be right, or there was trouble. Northcliffe, however, could always forgive the impulsiveness of youth: he did not forget that he had been young himself.

When the great American journalist, Arthur Brisbane,

died, a former colleague of his said to me, 'I never knew a brilliant mind make less sense of the political scene.' The same was true about Northcliffe. He knew what the public wanted, but he did not understand politics. A sturdy patriot, he had no fixed political principles. The politicians distrusted him accordingly. One of his sayings was, 'The British public hates power. That's why juries nearly always give verdicts against newspapers.' The world of politics as a whole was not well-disposed to this man who invariably struck out an independent line, who could not be cajoled, bullied or bought, and on all too many occasions acted in strict accordance with the familiar French dictum, '*Cet animal est très méchant. Quand on l'attaque, il se défend!*'

Northcliffe impressed me as a man whose great natural talents were denied their fullest development by success, particularly material success, coming too early. Cecil Rhodes, whose character reveals some points of similarity to Northcliffe's, made his fortune early, too. But he had a great statesmanlike ambition on which to lavish his wealth: for want of a similar goal, Northcliffe's ability became canalised in a money-making channel and, when he sought such a goal, his dictatorial habit and the power he wielded through his newspapers made the politicians chary of letting him into the fold.

I think the tragedy of his life was that he was conscious of his ability to do great things on a higher plane of service, but at the same time of his inability to reach that plane.

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CHAPTER XII

DISTANT THUNDER. PARIS 1910

‘*R*OLL France in blood and mud!’ ‘*Conspuez l’Angleterre!*’ ‘*Germania delenda est!*’; ‘*Nieder mit England!*’; ‘*Hoch die Buren!*’; ‘*We want Eight, And We Won’t Wait!*’; ‘*N’en parlons jamais, pensons-y toujours!*’; ‘*Germany’s future lies on the water!*’; ‘*A bas Guillaume!*’

Bellowed by angry mobs, thundered from political platforms, clanked out by the whirling rotary presses, what a cacophony of chauvinistic hate, what a witches’ sabbath of rabid nationalism, these cries of the pre-War era represent! Civilisation has slipped backward in many respects since the Peace of Versailles, but, Signor Gayda and Herr Goebbels’s storm troops of the pen notwithstanding, it seems to me that we have progressed since the days when such slogans were continually dinned into my youthful ears.

What scenes of political turmoil I have witnessed pass through my mind – Cossacks on the Nevsky Prospekt whirling their lead-loaded whips above the heads of fleeing rioters; the Berlin police breaking up Social Democrat parades and belabouring all and sundry, even small boys, with the flat of their heavy sabres; the Paris mob scattering amid shrill cries of rage and fear before the thundering hoofs of cuirassiers and the Municipal Guard! There was Jew-baiting, too, apart from the ‘ritual trials’ in Russia and Rumania, the pogroms of Kiev and Kishineff. I have heard execration hurled at the Jews in Paris when, to protest against the supposedly anti-militaristic tendency of a play of Henri Bernstein’s at the Comédie Française, hundreds of *camelots du roi*, students and their foolish like, beleaguered the theatre nightly, singing in chorus:

*'A bas les Juifs,
 A bas les Juifs,
 On va les prendre
 Sans plus attendre,
 A bas les Juifs,
 A bas les Juifs,
 On va les prendre
 Par le pif!¹*

and then breaking into the stirring strains of '*Ça ira*', to which the streets of Paris in revolt have so often resounded:

*'Ah, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,
 Tous les Youpins² à la lanterne,
 Ah, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,
 Tous les Youpins, on les pendra!'*

The Carmagnole, of which '*Ça ira*' is the refrain, as sung by hundreds of voices, is one of the most thrilling songs in the world – there are drum-beats and the thud of marching feet in every line. Hear the band of the Garde Républicaine play it some time, and you will realise what I mean. There is a grim pun in the original song as the patriots of 1792 sang it. It runs:

*'Dansons la Carmagnole,
 Vive le son, vive le son,
 Dansons la Carmagnole,
 Vive le son – du canon!'*

the point being that the word 'son' in French has two meanings – 'sawdust' and 'sound'. In the second line there is an allusion to the sawdust spread over the gory planks of the guillotine, in the last line, the use of the word '*canon*' adds a twist, and it is the 'sound' of the guns that is spoken of. At least, so the late Georges Cain, Curator of the Musée Carnavalet, the Museum of the City of Paris, and one of the greatest authorities on the French Revolution, once explained to me.

With such discordant music ringing in its ears, the world slid down the steep slope to war.

I was no more than fourteen when I first saw nationalist pas-

¹ *Pif*, nose, conk, in slang.

² *Youpin*. Slang for 'Jew'.

sion flare. It was on my first visit to France. My classics master at Downside had invited me to accompany him on a jaunt to Boulogne in the summer holidays. We crossed by that famous old excursion steamer *La Belle Marguerite* – it seems to me, for as little as five shillings each way – and stayed at a convent near the Porte des Dunes in the Old Town: I recall the water carafe and sugar bowl placed by my bed for the nightly draught of *eau sucrée*, held in esteem among the French for its supposedly soothing and sleep-inducing effects upon retiring.

The year was 1898. The Dreyfus case had been reopened and, with memories of Fashoda still fresh, feeling on both sides of the Channel was high. While we were at Boulogne an unfortunate cannon shot fired by a British fishery protection cruiser killed the skipper of a Boulogne trawler caught poaching off the Isle of Wight. The name of the cruiser's commander was Maude – odd how a name sticks in a child's memory! – and troops of infuriated Boulogne fishermen, accompanied by the fishwives in their frilled white petticoats, paraded the quays shouting '*Mort au Commandant Maude!*' (pronounced 'Mode').

The local Bishop, a most imposing cleric, was stopping at our convent on one of his periodic visitations, and the three of us dined together every evening in the convent parlour smelling faintly of beeswax and brass polish. The Catholic Church in France was, of course, strongly anti-dreyfusard while public opinion in Britain was as whole-heartedly on the side of Captain Dreyfus. There were heated arguments between Monseigneur and the English monk, my fellow-traveller, whose French was extremely sketchy but who stood up to his hierarchical superior like a Trojan and gave as good as he got.

It was my first glimpse of a phenomenon well understood in all Catholic countries abroad but which many English-speaking Roman Catholics, especially Irish Catholics, rarely seem to grasp, to wit, that it is possible to be at the same time anti-clerical and a good Catholic.

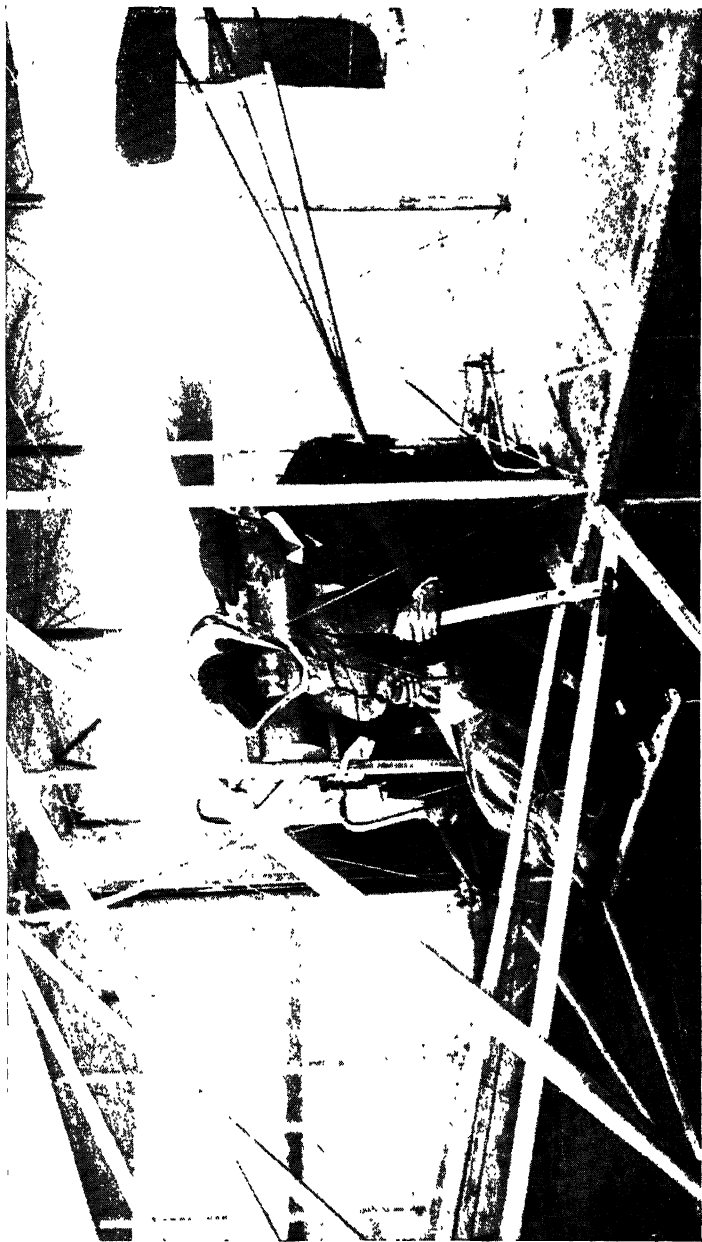
I saw Dreyfus once. It was in Paris, a year or two before the War. I was in the Métro with a French newspaper man who

suddenly drew my attention to a figure standing by the door, a small individual in a short covert coat with sandy hair gone white, who peered short-sightedly through pince-nez. '*C'est Dreyfus!*' my companion whispered.

I thought of the unfortunate Dreyfus and the frightful ordeal of military degradation to which he had been subjected when before the War I once witnessed the same penalty inflicted on two French soldiers who had been condemned by the civil authority to penal servitude for life for the murder of an old woman in a train. The ceremony was held on the square of the barracks of Les Lilas at the gates of Paris in the presence of the entire Paris garrison – 15,000 men. The silence was so profound as two warrant officers tore all military emblems from the uniforms of the delinquents that you could hear the stitches rip and the buttons tinkle as they fell to the ground.

The accused were of the most ignoble type of apache. But so ingrained is the military spirit in the hearts of the French, they were white and trembling by the time the degradation ceremony was over. They seemed scarcely able to walk as they were marched along the front of the troops drawn up in a hollow square to the prison van that was to take them back to jail.

In my experience Paris is one of the few cities of the world that lives up to expectations and does not disappoint, even when the freshness of a first visit has worn off. How thrilled I was when, at the age of nineteen, in the year 1903, I first sniffed what I always regard as the authentic Paris smell, the faintly acrid odour of burning Caporal tobacco, and let the roar of the Place du Havre, outside the St. Lazare terminus, fill my ears as with sweet music! Here was where my father had dodged bullets, escaped shells, and suffered arrest by the Communards even as I, in the years to come, in Lisbon, at the hands of the Portuguese revolutionaries: here his married life had begun. Funds were low, but I found a room for as little as three francs a day (half a crown at that time) in an obscure hotel near the Madeleine, lunched at cheap restaurants for a franc (tenpence) with a quarter of red wine thrown in, and revelled in every moment of my brief stay.



THE FIRST WOMAN TO FLY—MRS. HART O. BERG (NOW MRS. OGILVY-DRUCE) WITH
WILBUR WRIGHT, OCT. 7TH, 1908

A student and his *petite amie* had a room on my floor of the hotel and I do not know which made the more noise, their fallings-out or their reconciliations. Near by was an *établissement de bains* supplying bathing facilities to flats in the neighbourhood that had no bathroom. I would sometimes see a little procession emerging from the bath-house, consisting of a man carrying a large tin bath and an array of towels, followed by a second bearing steaming buckets of water suspended on a yoke from his shoulders.

César Ritz (*'le client n'a jamais tort'*) had not long opened his hotel on the Place Vendôme (where my father saw the Communards, at the instigation of the painter, Gustave Courbet, pull the Napoleon Column down), close to the Bristol, Edward VII's favourite hostelry. The great Paris restaurants still existed – the Café Anglais with its celebrated private room (*Cabaret Douze*, I think it was) where the Prince of Wales and his boon companion, the Prince of Orange – (better known as 'Prince Citron') – entertained their lady friends; Voisin's, where beleaguered Parisians in the Siege of Paris instituted the famous Zoo lunch, at which titbits from the slaughtered animals of the Jardin des Plantes furnished the bill of fare and where in the years to come I was frequently to lunch with Northcliffe; Paillard's; Larue and Maxim's, the latter with its famous *chasseur* who was supposed to be owed money by most of the *jeunesse dorée* of the town – all vanished now, except the last two. Great names figured on the theatre playbills – Coquelin Ainé; Sarah Bernhardt, whom in after years I was destined to visit many times in her *loge* at the Châtelet; Réjane, who once received me in her dressing-room summarily clad in corset and *culotte* in the presence of the author of her play, her secretary (male) and the theatre manager; Mounet-Sully; Jane Hading; Eve Lavallière.

The café chantant was in its heyday, the old caf' con' of Paulus and Yvette Guilbert. Paulus, who was long before my time, was the singer of the celebrated *'En revenant de la Revue'*, a ditty that did as much as anything to make the name of General Boulanger, the 'man on the black horse', who in 1888 was within an ace of becoming Royalist dictator of France

—in my youth the Guards in London used to march to the catchy tune. When Paulus was singing at the Ambassadeurs, the open air music-hall in the Champs-Élysée, enormous crowds would assemble under the chestnut trees outside to hear him—free of charge, of course—and applaud him to the echo. I came across one of the last surviving links with Boulanger when motoring in a remote corner of the Province of Quebec in 1933, collecting material for my novel *Dead Man Manor*, in the person of his former orderly, a Breton named Pellerinière, who had a neat farmstead near the Bonaventure River. Pellerinière, who did his military service with the 108th Infantry of the Line at Bergérac, afterwards fought in the Tonkin and North African campaigns under General Gallieni, later to become immortal as the defender of Paris in 1914, and emigrated to Canada in 1900.

But to return to Paris of 1903—Little Tich (whom Sacha Guitry described as one of the world's greatest actors) was a lion of the French music-hall and there were other comics like Joe Bagessen, a silent and much bewildered waiter (on the stage), who did nothing but break plates, and an entrancing person called Tom Hearn, billed as 'The Laziest Juggler on Earth' also as '*L'Homme Qui A Fait Rire Le Shah*' (The Man Who Made the Shah Laugh). Years later, when I was looking for a flat in London, I answered an advertisement which brought me to an office near Leicester Square. A grave gentleman in horn-rimmed spectacles received me. When he told me his name I cried, 'Not the man who made the Shah laugh?' and he replied, 'That's me!'

It was Tom Hearn, long since retired from the boards and then acting as agent for Maurice Chevalier.

Harry Fragon and Mistinguett were at the Ambassadeurs, the theatre where Paulus used to sing. You sat at little tables in the open air and watched the show: if you did not mind being rooked, you could dine in the balcony. The prices were steep—as the guide-books put it, '*Carte non chiffrée, prix de grandes bourses.*' My old friend, Hart O. Berg (who first brought the Wright Brothers to Europe) likes to tell the story of an experience he had at the Ambassadeurs, in the days when

he was young and poor in Paris. There was a certain wealthy American whom he wished, for business purposes, to impress. So, having carefully calculated the probable cost in advance, he invited him, together with the American's wife, to dine with him at the Ambassadeurs. All went smoothly until the lady, catching sight of the *maître d'hôtel* taking round a box of enormous peaches, each sedulously wrapped in cotton wool, exclaimed, 'Why, wouldn't it be lovely if we had a peach salad? I make an elegant peach salad.'

With a sickly smile the host beckoned the waiter across. In a cold perspiration he watched the lady select one, two, three, four peaches. Fingering his spare stock of cash, he figured frantically what each peach might cost—ten francs, twelve, fifteen, a louis, oh, surely not as much as a louis? To cut a long story short, when the bill was presented, he had just enough to cover it, plus the tip, and had to walk home. 'When I tell this story now,' says Hart in his genial way, 'I tell it at the soup!'

When I returned to Paris in 1910—this time for the *Daily Mail*—it was still, in most British eyes, *le Continong* and a place of fascinating wickedness. London was still seven hours away, with the formidable Channel between, of which a witty Frenchman said, '*Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas, le Pas de Calais!*', the London-Paris telephone was expensive and infuriatingly unsatisfactory, and we had to wait until evening for the London morning newspapers. Now the two capitals are but three hours apart by air, the Dunkirk ferry has, thanks to a profound if extremely belated effort of imagination by the British and French railways, at last abridged the discomforts of the train and boat journey, telephonic communication is cheap and easy, and the London morning papers are on sale on the grands boulevards at breakfast-time.

More than this, under the influence of the War years which, for the first time, brought the masses of the two nations into closest contact, Paris at present probably welcomes more tourists in a year than Edinburgh, and London more French trippers than Lyons or Marseilles. Paris has become subtly

anglicised: also, the American invasion of the post-War years has left its stamp. The grands boulevards have gone Anglo-American: on the other hand, the new blocks of flats arising everywhere, particularly those erected on the site of the old fortifications, '*les fortifs*', (where, in my time, if you walked alone after dark, you were likely to get a knife in the ribs from a prowling apache) are of the purest modern German architecture. But then, so are the new apartment houses everywhere. Whenever I go to Paris now I have the impression that the city is just a great Anglo-American suburb of London.

I don't mind. Paris was due for a change. The city badly wanted modernising. It had foul slums: it was insanitary in many ways, with an electricity supply that was continually giving out and the worst telephone service in the world (not excepting London in pre-War days). Recalling the frightful exploitation of labour during the three years I spent in Paris for the *Daily Mail*, the sweating conditions, the absence of modern sanitation in the tenements and in many factories, I have nothing but sympathy for the revolt of the French proletariat that put Léon Blum in power.

In my lifetime I have seen the development of the telephone, the motor-car, wireless telegraphy and aerial navigation, motion pictures and now television.

With regard to flying, as a newspaper correspondent in Germany I reported all the early experiments with dirigibles. I find in my diary, under the date of May 29, 1906, when I was stationed in Berlin, a note about Major von Parseval's new airship. It had a 90 h.p. engine and a propellor above the car. My diary records impressively that on its trials at Tegel, the Parseval dirigible mounted two or three hundred yards in the air, without a wind, and adds, 'The inventor *claims* to be able to reach a speed of between twenty-five and thirty miles an hour.'

In the same way I followed Count Zeppelin's early experiments and their attendant troubles which, after a period of thirty years, thanks to the faith and skill of the men he had trained, led to the mammoth Hindenburg which found disaster only after a number of successful Atlantic crossings. Count Zeppelin I saw several times. He was a grand old gentleman.

In connection with him, I discovered that the first officer killed on the German side in the war of 1870 was an Englishman called Winsloe. Count Zeppelin, then a Uhlán, had the opening brush of the war with the enemy when, hard upon the declaration of war, he led a raiding party into the outskirts of Metz. With him rode young Winsloe, a British officer of dragoons, who was temporarily attached to Count Zeppelin's regiment. Winsloe was the first to fall under the French bullets. Years after, in New York, I met Christa Winsloe, Winsloe's niece, who corroborated the story. She told me that Zeppelin in his young days was always known as 'The mad Count' owing to his belief in the future of the airship. By the way, a German once mentioned to me that there were 1,871 officers killed on the German side on the war of '70: one could not forget the figure because it was the same as the date the war ended.

The aeroplane was in its infancy when I first took up newspaper work in Paris. Northcliffe was at Pau in 1908 when the Brothers Wright startled the world with their performances in the first heavier-than-air machine and, as the result of what he saw there, offered a prize of £10,000 for the first crossing of the Channel. (A later prize, for the first crossing of the Atlantic, seemed such a safe bet at the time that Brother Harold, the financial genius of the family, was able to lay it off with an insurance company for a negligible premium.) Northcliffe pinned his faith to the aeroplane as the airship of the future. Experience showed him to be right, although I do not remember that he or any of the experts at that time ever contemplated the present-day rôle of the aeroplane as a carrier of mails and freight, as well as passengers.

I flew through the night from New York to Chicago last year – 800 miles in six hours. As we hurtled through the blackness at nearly 200 miles an hour, I found my thoughts turning backwards to those early days of aviation in France. There were flying schools everywhere – Mourmelon-le-Grand, Villers-Coubly, St. Cyr, are some of the names that occur to me – and a whole crop of flying meetings, in imitation of the two great flying meetings at Rheims. I had seen the Wrights giving

demonstrations in Berlin and it seemed fantastic that their frail box-kite affair, which had to be catapulted into the air by some crude elastic device, could ever remain aloft.

Of course, it was fantastic. The heroism and faith of those early pioneers were prodigious. At the flying schools and the flying meetings the toll of death was constant: some of the machines then in use were so dangerous that only an expert trained on that particular model could manage them; the Antoinette monoplane, for example, that Hubert Latham used to fly – I saw Thomas, one of the Levasseur mechanics, killed in an Antoinette myself, and old Levasseur, the inventor, with the tears running down his beard, as they pulled the body clear of the wreck. But the pioneers went on, the women as well as the men. The Baronne Delaroche, a very pretty young Frenchwoman, was one of the first women pilots – I was present at the horrible accident which put an end to her flying career. I came across her photograph a year or two back, in the sort of sun-bonnet she wore when in the air, and presented it to Amelia Earhart.

Poor Amelia – A.E. as her husband, George Palmer Putnam, always called her – what a gracious, spontaneous, charming person she was! I sat next to her at a dinner in New York about six months before her solo flight across the Atlantic and she told me she was trying to get information about the first women flyers for the purpose of a book she was writing. I offered to jot down some notes for her and to try and find an old photo of the Baronne Delaroche I had somewhere.

She came to see me afterwards at the Savoy Plaza, where I was living, and we had a long talk. She looked very boyish in her simply cut tweeds with her untidy mop of fair hair. Her complexion was roughened with the sun and wind – she despised make-up – but she had the sweetly innocent expression of a young child. She refused tea or a cocktail; but asked for cocoa. She told me she drank cocoa because she wanted to 'fatten up'; a flask of cocoa accompanied her on all her flights. She always lost weight when flying, she explained – as much as two or three pounds on her longer journeys – and 'I can't really afford to give any weight away,' she added with her

frank smile: it made me understand the fearful strain these flights imposed on her, however little she made of it.

We talked of Lindbergh – ‘Slim’, as she called him – whom she knew very well, and of his horror of publicity. She told me that on one occasion she and Lindbergh met in the elevator of an office building in Los Angeles and nobody recognised them. We spoke of the pioneer fliers, men and women. She drew my attention to the fact that the Wrights did not foresee the transportation possibilities of the aeroplane – in their exhibition days they used to send their machine from one aerodrome to the other by train.

The morning the flash reached New York that she had flown the Atlantic alone, I happened to be standing at the tape machine in my brother Douglas’s office on East 42nd Street. Within three minutes my message of congratulation was on its way to Londonderry where she had landed: she wrote to me from the liner that brought her home that mine was the first wire she received. Among her many congratulants was the local dry-cleaner she employed at Rye, New York, where she and George Putnam had their house. He cabled, ‘I knew you’d do it. I never lost a customer yet.’

She liked to tell stories against herself – and how well she told them! I remember one. After her great flight across the Pacific when her name and photograph were again blazoned the length and breadth of the American continent, she was motoring alone in the Far West and stopped for petrol at a service station in the desert. A fat woman manipulated the pump, turning her head from time to time to stare at the visitor. At length she said, ‘Ain’t I seed your pitcher in the paper?’ to which Amelia replied sweetly, ‘Have you?’ ‘Sure,’ said the garage lady. ‘Let me see now? Don’t tell me! I know, you’re Mrs. Roosevelt!’

Of course, the point of this story, which Amelia Earhart recounted with such gay laughter, is that the wife of the President is rated for the many admirable qualities she possesses more highly than for her good looks.

Success did not spoil Amelia Earhart. She remained the simple *bonne camarade* she always was, as unaffected, as

feminine, as ever, with a frank smile and a firm handshake for me when we met. She was not in the least mannish – she looked charming in a *décolleté* gown, for instance – nor did she take to the air with any feminist desire to compete with men: her only idea was to demonstrate to the women of America that flying is an occupation at which a woman has an equal chance with a man to excel.

But her engaging, always faintly amused expression concealed an iron will. She was in no sense bossy; but she knew what she wanted to do with her life, and she did it, and no human being could deflect her from it. The rule she followed with regard to her flights was simplicity itself. She saw to it that the plane she was to fly was equipped with the most modern instruments and personally satisfied herself that the engine was in good running order and the machine in good condition – the rest she left to Fate. She relied on her instruments: I heard her make a speech once in which she said she felt sure that many Atlantic flyers had come to grief because, flying blind, they had lost faith in their instruments, fallen into a panic, and drifted far off their course. Nothing was harder, she declared, than to fly by one's instruments: it demanded iron self-control to accomplish it. I know she died game, realising that she had left nothing to chance. I can hear her saying, 'It's too bad, but I haven't got the breaks. You've got to have the breaks.'

I have seen it stated that Katharine Wright, the sister of Wilbur and Orville Wright, was the first woman to fly in an aeroplane. This is not correct: Orville Wright told me himself in Berlin that his sister had always refused to go up, that she had never flown. Actually the honour belongs to the former Mrs. Hart O. Berg (now Mrs. Ogilvy Druce). It was Hart O. Berg who originally brought the Wrights to Europe and at the Camp d'Avour, Le Mans, on October 8, 1908 – the Wrights did not go to Pau until later in the year – the then Mrs. Hart O. Berg very pluckily went up with the late Wilbur Wright, the first woman to travel in a heavier-than-air machine. Mrs. Ogilvy Druce has kindly allowed me to reproduce the photograph perpetuating this memorable event.



MISS AMELIA EARHART
(Wide World Photos)

Flying in those days was all very slapdash and very, very experimental. At the Second Flying Meeting at Rheims in 1911 all sorts of weird machines were presented by their inventors to take part in the races – so many tours of the field round the pylons and, as a grand finale, a flap out of the ground to round a church spire a few miles away and return. One of these machines, so extremely odd in its appearance that it was immediately dubbed ‘the flying coffee-pot’, obstinately refused to leave *terra firma*. The inventor was driving it himself: how the stands would guff him as his plane after a few feeble hops would come to a dead stop amid clouds of smoke from the exhaust and repeat this performance over and over again!

The driver of that machine was Bréguet, one of the biggest manufacturers of war planes in the world to-day.

There were no aeroplanes in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 and none in the Balkan War in the following year. There was no protection for pilot or passenger in the British Army machine in which I was taken for my first aeroplane trip, some time in 1913: in those days to fly meant being drenched with castor oil from the rotary motor, half frozen by the cold and deafened by the propeller. I remember the pilot remarking to me as I clambered into the nondescript and somewhat battered biplane at Camberley that afternoon, ‘As long as the damned thing don’t fall to bits in the air!’ I never suffered such agonising pain in my ears from the cold as I did on that flight.

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After the somewhat stolid and even flow of life in Berlin, I found Paris vital, electrifying. In France news has a way of exploding with devastating suddenness. In less dramatic countries Providence usually shows a decent respect for the Sabbath rest; but in France the big news has a most disconcerting habit of ‘breaking’ on Sundays.

Even more than the United States, it is the land of sensations. The mysterious death of President Félix Faure, stricken with death while receiving the visit of a veiled lady in the Presidential Palace of the Elysée: the recurrent bombshells of the Dreyfus case, as, for instance, the suicide of Colonel Henry,

associated with the forgery of the famous *bordereau*, the disclosures resulting from the accidental asphyxiation of Dreyfus's champion, Emile Zola: the assassination of Gaston Calmette, editor of the *Figaro*, by Madame Caillaux, the French Premier's wife (to prevent Calmette, who was conducting a violent campaign against her husband, from publishing certain private letters Caillaux had written to her before her divorce from her former husband) are some instances taken at random to illustrate my meaning. Early one morning in Paris I was throwing some clothes into a bag preparatory to catching the Sud Express, in response to an urgent instruction to go to Lisbon to cover a threatened revolution, when the telephone bell rang and I was informed that, at the start of the *Journal* air race, a competitor had driven into the assembled French Cabinet, killing Maurice Berteaux, the Minister of War, and seriously injuring Monis, the Premier. That is the way things happen in Paris.

Sappers and marines were frantically throwing up dykes of sandbags on the Place de la Concorde and across the foot of the Rue Royale to stem the steadily rising waters of the Seine when I began work in Paris in January 1910. Very soon all telegraphic and telephonic communication with London was cut off and I was reduced to sending my dispatches to London via the New York cable or by telephone to Berlin. As the floods subsided so the excitement grew in anticipation of the first night of Edmond Rostand's famous 'animal' play *Chantecler* which, after something like three years of postponements, disputes and unparalleled newspaper ballyhoo, was at last in its final rehearsals.

I had a ticket for the *répétition générale* which in Paris is equivalent to the first night. People had come from all over the world for it and the dramatic critics from London and New York were present in force. The auditorium of the old Porte St. Martin theatre was a wonderful sight and the *corbeille* – the first row of the dress circle which in France is the fashionable part of the house – was resplendent with its careful 'dressing' with the most beautiful women in Paris. The mode was for long, flowing evening dresses and egrets worn straight up

on the head – the combined effect of the plumes, the white shoulders, the jewels, was overwhelming: I have never seen such a brilliant audience, either before or since. The theatre was crammed, they had started to shut the doors (no one would be admitted after the first act started, it had been announced) and we were waiting for the lights to go down and the historic '*trois coups*' to signal the rising of the curtain, when the lovely Lina Cavalieri was observed slowly making her way along the front row of the dress circle.

With her perfect profile and matchless skin, she was then at the height of her fame and beauty. A vision in white, she was wrapped from head to foot in ermine, a tall egret rising from her shining black hair, her neck a blaze of diamonds. Every glass in the house was turned on her as, superb and unhurried, she reached her place and sat down in the very centre of the *corbeille*. As she did so the lights in the house went down and the *trois coups* resounded.

I never saw an entrance more perfectly timed.

The manager of the *Continental Daily Mail*, in whose rather ramshackle premises in the Rue du Sentier, the centre of the Paris textile trade, I had my office, was Ralph Norman Angell Lane, destined to win parliamentary laurels, a knighthood and the Nobel Peace Prize through the agency of a single book. Our rooms at the Rue du Sentier adjoined, and I saw him almost every day. Born in England, but brought up in the United States, Norman Angell – he subsequently dropped his first and last names – had spent a number of years in Paris journalism, first on the old *Galvani Messenger* – nobody remembers it now, but in its time it was the leading journal printed in English on the Continent with an illustrious history – and afterwards on the *Eclair*. When I first met him, on my arrival in Paris in January 1910, he was just completing his famous book, entitled in its original version *Europe's Optical Illusion* – this was changed in subsequent editions to *The Great Illusion*. I read most of it in manuscript and helped him with the proofs. Of course, Norman Angell was a decade ahead of contemporary thought; but even at that time it was impossible to read his dispassionate and logical arguments in support of his contention

that even a successful war is economically unprofitable to the victors without realising that here was a wholly original and brilliantly reasoned case against war, the more effective than the common run of pacifist propaganda in that its arguments were unanswerable.

Small of stature, methodical in his habits and precise of speech, Norman Angell made a rather colourless impression at first glance, with his ash-blonde hair brushed well back from the dome-like brow, light blue eyes and pallid face. If outwardly he appeared to be of a cold temperament, he had the warmest of hearts, which revealed itself in a great understanding for the difficulties of a young man like myself pitchforked into the maelstrom of the great Northcliffe organisation, and an infinite tenderness for children and animals. But he was a man with a mission. Without anything of the author's vanity, he believed in himself and, more than in himself, in his book: he knew he had something which would benefit humanity and it was evident that he intended to devote his life to that end. It was impossible to associate with him without realising that he was headed for great things; although I don't think that he had any better idea than I of what the future held in store for him.

He had a boat on the Marne and we spent many happy summer days sailing together, while he told me of the progress his ideas were making.

It is my impression, but I am not sure of this, that he originally issued *Europe's Optical Illusion* at his own expense. Eventually, the Garton Foundation helped to re-launch the book in a series of editions which carried it to the ends of the earth. If a man is not a prophet in his own country, it is equally true that prophetic gifts are rarely fully realised in the lifetime of the prophet; but it is my belief that posterity will accord a high place to Norman Angell and his book, so triumphantly justified by the disasters which followed in the train of the Versailles Peace.

I had my fill of the dramatic during the three years I spent on and off in Paris—I was often away on special missions. French politics are full of drama. The violence of the Cham-

ber of Deputies in moments of excitement is terrifying. I heard Aristide Briand deliver one of the greatest speeches of his career when as Premier he justified his action in breaking the railway strike by mobilising the railway men. Interruptions of almost epileptic fury from the Socialists checked him continually. Sometimes the desk slamming and the shouting lasted for as long as five minutes, during which time Briand, white as a sheet, his fine eyes dreamier and more inscrutable than ever, leaned impassive against the President's tribune, that same tribune which had heard the Convention yelling death to Danton. The high point of the debate was reached when Briand, at the climax of his peroration, held out his two hands, palms outward, to the House, and cried, 'See my hands! You will not find there a drop of blood!'

My diary records (1911) a meeting with Joseph Caillaux – bald-headed, vital and violent is the way it described him – at the Ministry of Finance, as he was embarking on his first premiership, little dreaming what fearful blows Fate was getting ready to deal him. Even in politics Gallic wit often enlivens the drama and I remember that one of the Caillaux's secretaries had stuck up a notice on the door to announce that the new Prime Minister had transferred his office to the Ministry of the Interior. It was fearfully hot in Paris that summer and the notice, in imitation of the cards which Paris butchers place in their windows during a heat wave, read: '*Pendant les chaleurs, le Ministre est à l'Intérieur.*'

Louis Lépine was Prefect of Police during all the time I was in Paris, a tiny, bald-headed little man with a white goatee, and a very efficient police chief he was. The Socialists pursued him with their particular hatred: for instance, the *Humanité*, Jean Jaurès' newspaper, usually referred to him as '*le sinistre gnôme*', or, from some entirely unfounded story that he was a drug addict, as '*l'éthéromane sanglant*'. Once at the height of a May Day riot I found myself close to him. A Socialist Paris Councillor who had been hustled by the police was haranguing him violently. Little Lépine merely said, 'You shouldn't have come, monsieur, you shouldn't have come. Moreover, allow me to draw your attention to the fact that a horse is eating your

hat.' The enraged Councillor whipped round only to discover, in fact, that the horse of one of the Municipal Guards was inquiringly licking his bowler.

Guichard, a lean, wiry man, was Chief Commissioner of Police. I saw a good deal of him at the time of the motor bandits, a gang which, under the leadership of a man named Bonnot, terrorised the city for months. Their procedure was to hold up bank messengers – in Paris as in London these unfortunate people are dressed up in a special uniform, one would almost think, so that hold-up men will have no difficulty in recognising him – commandeer a car, and disappear; and they invariably killed their victim.

Bonnot had a number of narrow escapes. On one occasion, he shot down at the very house door one of Guichard's chief assistants who had tracked him down to a small shop in the suburbs. The bandit escaped, but the shopkeeper was arrested. The police had nothing on this man except that they knew he was an associate of the gang; so, just to 'learn' him, Guichard had him purposely led through the infuriated crowd who beat him within an inch of his life.

Bonnot met his fate one Sunday morning – Sunday again! He was run to earth by the local gendarmerie in a garage kept by a Russian anarchist on the outskirts of Paris. I had arranged to take the Sunday off in order to play golf at La Boulie with my young brother, Douglas, who was stopping with me. Early in the morning one of my news tipsters on a Paris evening paper telephoned me the news to my rooms on the Boulevard des Capucines (where the Samaritaine de Luxe now stands), we hired a fast car outside the Grand Hôtel across the way, and were on the spot before even any of the French newspaper men.

It was a fantastic scene. The garage, a miserable wooden shack, occupied an island site at some cross-roads, and the two bandits, who appeared to have plenty of ammunition, fired at any head that showed. In addition to the gendarmes, all the local sportsmen had turned out and the spectacle of some of these Tartarins with their double-barrelled guns and their belts stuck full of pistols and knives, stalking fearfully from tree to tree, was ludicrous in the extreme. As the morning

wore on, police from Paris and infantry with machine-guns from Vincennes arrived, not to mention thousands of sightseers from Paris and all the country round – it was Sidney Street,¹ all over again.

But at last the bandits' ammunition began to give out, their fire slackened and died, and the next thing we knew, the shack went up in flames. Two of Guichard's men, a gendarme, Brother Douglas and I, were first across No Man's Land and into the stronghold. Douglas and I assisted in dragging Bonnot's dead body from the flames: we were only just clear of the house when the roof fell in. The whole gang was subsequently rounded up: four of them were guillotined at one fell swoop and one of the newspapers published a picture of the four severed heads in a row.

In the dawn of a lovely June morning, under the walls of the Santé prison in Paris, I saw Liabeuf, the apache, guillotined. He had been sent to prison, as he claimed, unjustly for living on the immoral earnings of women and on his release from jail, set out to find the detective who had put him away. With this object in view he made himself a rudimentary armour of leather, studded with spikes. In due course he tracked down the detective and killed him, although actually it was the wrong man. Liabeuf was caught and sentenced to death.

For some reason the case created a furore in the underworld of Paris and the primest collection of cut-throats and their attendant molls turned out to witness the execution. As we waited at the scaffold for the doomed man to appear, we could hear the mob baying on the Place Denfert Rochereau, where the police barricades were set up – a fearsome sound: a police inspector was shot in the *fracas*. Liabeuf went to his death roaring like a bull and protesting his innocence: the screech of the knife as it fell, cutting off his cries, is a sound which will haunt me to the day of my death. I was much impressed by the

¹ On December 10, 1910, masses of police, reinforced by a company of Scots Guards from the Tower of London, delivered a regular siege of a house in Sidney Street, off the Mile End Road, in London, where a band of Russian anarchists, after killing three of a party of City Police sent to arrest them, entrenched themselves.

team work of the executioner's three aides; they had their victim trussed up on the *bascule* and tipped forward with the *lunette* on his neck within thirty seconds of his descending from the cart – they reminded me of the sailors in those gun competitions at the Military Tournament. The famous Deibler, a stately, bearded figure in top-hat and frock-coat, did nothing except release the knife. When the body had been removed a lot of urchins appeared from nowhere and began pelting each other with the bloodstained sawdust. I felt very sick. I did not feel any better when, as I turned away from the scaffold, I came face to face with M. Hamard, the famous Chef de la Sûreté (he told me once he had attended eighty-four guillotinnings), a benevolent-looking old gentleman with a nice white beard who, rubbing his hands together, inquired gently, 'And what did you think of our little execution?'

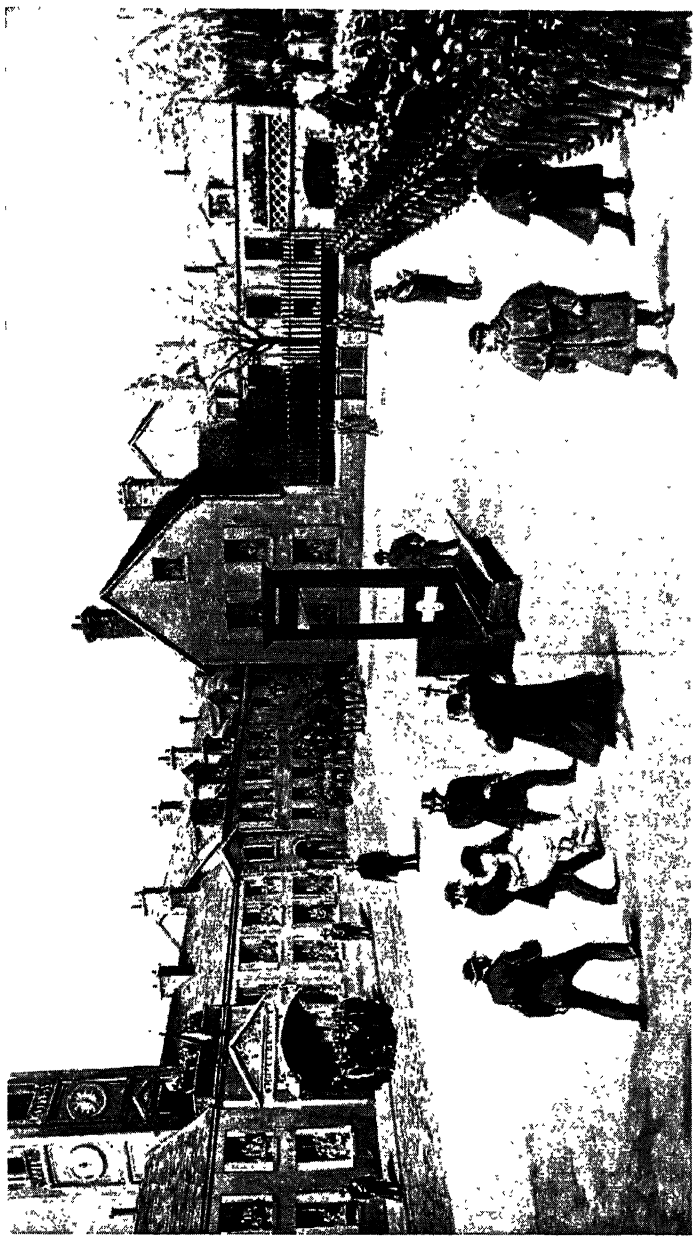
I still have my police card to this ceremony. It is surrounded by a black mourning band – a delicate touch, I submit.

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Montmartre and parties that lasted into the dawn, at the Abbaye de Thélème, the Rat Mort, the Capitole – to wind up such nights one would motor out to the Pré Catalan, in the Bois, and drink milk hot from the cow and eat brioches: it was odd to see the young-feller-me-lads and their pretty ladies, all in evening dress, sitting round on stools in the cow stall in the bright morning sunshine, while the cow was being milked. At the time of King George V's Coronation, in 1911, the late Sir John Taverner, the Agent General for Victoria in London, who was an old friend of my wife's family, turned up in Paris with a couple of Australian Cabinet Ministers in tow, demanding to be shown the sights. We had a gay but entirely respectable evening round the '*boîtes*' at Montmartre. A British Socialist M.P. was in our party: his name was J. Ramsay MacDonald.

When I recalled the occasion to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's mind years later, when he was Prime Minister of England and I was calling on him in his room at the House of Commons, alas! he had forgotten that evening, and all the pretty ladies who clamoured to be bought drinks at the Rat Mort.

Sir John Taverner was a grand person, fat and cheerful, like



A GUILLOTINING

The execution of Madame Thomas at Romorantin, 1887.
(To this day parricides are executed barefooted and in their shifts)

all Australians, full of horse sense and refreshingly free from snobbishness. He was a member of the International Institute of Agriculture, founded by the King of Italy, and when staying at an hotel in Rome for one of its meetings discovered on his bill a charge for lighting. When he protested he was escorted upstairs and shown various candles which, notwithstanding the fact that the electric light was installed, stood on the mantelpieces of the sitting-room and bedroom. The hotel insisted that the charge was usual and must be paid. 'Right oh,' said Sir John cheerfully. 'But, since I've paid for the candles, they're mine, eh?' And pulling them from their candlesticks he bundled them in a sheet of newspaper and, descending to the street, with a beaming air distributed them among the cabmen on the rank outside the hotel.

Australians are true democrats, and we could do with more of their simple kindness in the Old Country. The impertinent air of condescension which British officialdom at one time was pleased to assume towards the Australians always infuriated me: it was seen at its worst in the War Office wiseacres who, during the War, saw fit to install Anzac headquarters in London in the heart of one of the foulest Central London slums, the Horseferry Road. The result of this gross psychological blunder was that thousands of young Australian and New Zealand soldiers, who had never left home before, received their first impression of the Old Country from the ragged, neglected children, the slatternly housewives and the mean streets of this congested area of Westminster. Matters, however, have greatly improved in this respect and everything was done to give visitors from the Antipodes at the recent Coronation pleasant recollections of their stay, as they would be the first to acknowledge. I might point out that our Royal family, from the days of Queen Victoria on, have always been most punctilious in showing courtesy to visitors from our Australian and New Zealand Dominions.

I retain an invigorating impression of ex-President Theodore Roosevelt as he came blustering into Paris like a fresh wind from his own American plains in 1910, on his way home

from his African hunting tour. In Rome, which was his last stop, someone at the Vatican who obviously knew little of the temperament of the distinguished visitor attempted to prescribe conditions for the ex-President's audience with the Pope and a controversy ensued in which Roosevelt was taken to task by a section of the French Press, notably the *Journal*.

Showing his teeth in the most amiable of smiles, the ex-President received the newspaper men at the American Embassy where he was staying. Each of us was presented in succession, but when it came to the turn of a bearded Frenchman representing a now defunct newspaper called *Paris-Journal*, the Rooseveltian brow grew thundery. 'No,' he cried, snatching back his hand, 'no! His paper printed falsehoods about me: I won't receive him.' The unfortunate reporter broke into a flood of expostulation: Jules Hedeman, of the *Matin*, who was acting as spokesman, endeavoured to explain that the *Journal* and *Paris-Journal* were entirely distinct newspapers; but the 'Bull Moose' would not hear a word – he would make no statement until the offender had withdrawn. Actually the luckless *Paris-Journal* man, his brown beard quivering with excitement, had to leave before some of us could persuade the ex-President that he was labouring under a misapprehension. On that our colleague was fetched back and the great man apologised handsomely.

When going round the Carnavalet Museum, with its French Revolution treasures, Theodore Roosevelt was shown the original order of the Swiss Guard signed by Louis XVI, when the mob was attacking the Tuileries, bidding the guard to cease fire, thereby sealing the fate of those gallant defenders and, ultimately, his own. Holding the age-yellowed sheet with its line or two of spidery writing in his hand, the former President observed thoughtfully, 'Mark Twain remarked that, if Louis XVI had had the spunk of a female medieval saint, there would have been a St. Bartholomew's massacre in Paris that night.'

For those who are interested in coincidences, I might mention that, some years later, at a children's party in London, a small boy was proudly demonstrating to me a miniature cinema

projector he had received as a Christmas gift. The very first film he showed – one supplied with the toy – was a picture of Theodore Roosevelt's visit to the Invalides on the occasion of his Paris stay, with your humble deponent prominently visible in the foreground.

A wonderful family, these Roosevelts, that has given two Presidents, each in his own way absolutely outstanding, to the United States. They are probably the oldest family in the United States of old Dutch stock able to trace their ancestry clear back to the days of Nieuw Amsterdam. Their clannish spirit is strong, their home life happy and united, and they run to families of boys, who at Groton, the American Eton, and Harvard, carry on the splendid family tradition from generation to generation. Though the two great branches of the family – the Theodore Roosevelt and the Franklin D. Roosevelt branches – are only distantly related and, politically speaking, sundered, the same strong clan spirit persists in both. It has been my privilege to see something of both branches in their homes and it can safely be said that you will find no happier family atmosphere prevailing anywhere than that to be encountered at the White House, or in the homes of the late Theodore Roosevelt's sons and daughters, or at Oyster Bay, the family mansion, so closely identified with the former President, where his widow lives surrounded by the souvenirs of his whirlwind and inspiring career.

Actually the present President of the United States was no closer akin to the late Theodore Roosevelt than fifth cousin, though Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt was more nearly related. Which reminds me of a story. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to the Presidency, my friend, Ted Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt's eldest son, was Governor of the Philippines and, as he had been appointed by the Republicans and the new Administration was Democratic, he resigned in due course. While he was waiting for his successor to be nominated, a leading Filipino politician asked him what relation he was to the new President. 'Fifth cousin about to be removed!' said Ted. It was Ted Roosevelt, I am told, who, hearing that Lindbergh was planning a solo flight across the Atlantic to

France, thoughtfully provided the Lone Eagle with a letter of introduction to the American Ambassador in Paris!

The Vernon Castles were dancing at the Café de Paris: there were lunches and dinners in the American colony, to which I was often taken by my friend, the English novelist, the late A. R. Goring-Thomas, who seemed to know everybody in American society in Paris; tea-parties at Anna Gould's, the Duchesse de Talleyrand, at her magnificent rose-coloured mansion in the Bois, which irreverent Americans called from its shape 'The Syracuse Soap-Box'; and jaunts across the river to call on Jo Davidson and Epstein and the painters.

It was Epstein who designed the monument over Oscar Wilde's tomb in Père-Lachaise cemetery. On certain moral issues the French can be as prudish as any people in the world and, to the sculptor's wrath, the Paris police insisted on providing a sort of canvas *brassière* for the hermaphrodite figures on the monument. Epstein must have a remarkable memory. I went to see him about this incident at the time and we did not meet again for a quarter of a century when I ran into him at the Café Royal in London, and he recalled the circumstances of our last encounter to my mind.

Jean-Gabriel Domergue, the well-known French portrait painter, whose lovely Florentine style villa is one of the social centres of Cannes, once told me of a remarkable childhood experience he had in connection with the death of Oscar Wilde. In Paris as a little boy, he had a French journalist as tutor. The tutor had a lady friend whom he used to meet in a cheap hotel on the Left Bank, in the Rue des Beaux Arts. The hotel was small and gas-lit and, groping his way along the dark corridor one evening to where his *chère amie* was waiting for him, the tutor by mistake entered the room next door where, to his horror, he perceived a closed coffin standing on two chairs. When he recounted his macabre adventure to his friend, she said, 'I know. It's a poor devil of an Englishman who lived here. He died yesterday and is to be buried to-morrow. His name is Vildé, or something like that.' With a sudden exclamation the tutor left her, and,

rushing back to the adjoining room, sought by the light of a match the name on the coffin.

It was Oscar Wilde. When little Jean-Gabriel Domergue turned up next morning, his tutor said, 'No lessons to-day, mon petit. Instead, you are coming with me to the funeral of a great poet.' And so it was that an obscure French writer who could respect genius and a small boy destined to become a celebrated artist were in the handful of faithful friends who followed that unhappy man to his last resting-place.

Once when the paper wanted an article about Cubism, then in its infancy, I found my way to a studio of Bohemian bareness skied up many flights near the Odéon where an excitable young artist named Fernand Leger talked so inexplicably (or so it seemed to me) on the subject that, breaking my father's rule, I had to produce pen and pencil and write it all down.

In New York a year or two ago, I saw a Cubist painting of Fernand Leger's that had sold for 20,000 dollars.

Diaghileff, whom I had met in Berlin, gave me a rover ticket to the Russian Ballet on its reappearance at the Châtelet in 1911, the year of King George V's Coronation. I went almost every night and saw the whole of its repertoire, including such new ballets as *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* and *Le Dieu Bleu*. *Le Dieu Bleu* was probably the most beautiful and sumptuous of all the Russian Ballet's productions. As the Blue God, an Eastern idol, Nijinsky appeared in a towering head-dress with his body dyed a bright blue and Léon Bakst excelled himself in the barbaric splendour of costumes and *décors* and the beauty of the colour groupings. *Le Dieu Bleu* was to have been the clou of the Russian Ballet's Coronation season in London; but the cost of transporting the enormously elaborate scenery across the Channel proved prohibitive and this particular production was abandoned.

Sometimes Diaghileff took me behind the scenes while the ballets were in progress and I remember being struck by the charming camaraderie which prevailed among the dancers, although it is true that turbulent scenes sometimes occurred

at rehearsals. Once I stood under the window through which Nijinsky executed the prodigious leap which concluded *Le Spectre de la Rose* (to the music of Weber's *Invitation à la Valse*). He landed like a gossamer and I can see him now, in his brief costume of rose leaves and pink tights, his eldritch Slav face with the oddly slanting eyes gleaming with perspiration, the breath coming staccato between his parted lips, gathering himself up and turning to smile at Diaghileff and me, while behind him the famous valse swept on to its finale and the exquisite Karsavina, alone on that vast stage, mimed her adieux to the vision of a night. Artist that he was, to put himself in tune with the part, as he told me, Nijinsky used to drench his body with attar of roses and to this day I never hear the long growling arpeggios which usher in the valse proper in Weber's masterpiece without the faint fragrance of roses blended with the odour of warm grease paint, stealing over my senses, in memory of Nijinsky in *Le Spectre de la Rose*. I was at the matinée at which, for the first time, he danced *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* and was furiously denounced by the *Figaro* next day for the obscenity of certain of his gestures. The *Figaro* was perfectly right; but it was impossible to restrain the genius of a Nijinsky: when he danced he was lost to the world about him.

Smuggled in as a pupil of the Rumanian violinist, Enesco, then teaching at the École des Beaux Arts, I went to the Quat'z' Arts Ball. The year I went the period of the ball was Ancient Rome and the opening procession, with the most beautiful models in Paris standing nude on the various floats, was one of the most artistically arranged pageants I have ever seen. But the ensuing orgies beggared description: I do not regard myself as a prude, but I was not to be so shocked again until, a quarter of a century later, I went to the infamous 'Harlem drag', in the Negro quarter of New York. With the prevalent trend of morals, I tremble to think of what the Quat'z' Arts Ball has now become. One snapshot of that evening lingers in my memory – I suppose, because it was so French. A very stout lady, a retired model I surmised, from the fact that she had discarded every vestige of her

clothing, was having a violent altercation with a student, likewise in his birthday suit, whom she accused of insulting her. Trembling with indignation, she said to him loftily, 'At least, I am correct, and I have the right to ask you to be the same!'

An article I read in a magazine about the remarkable gland transplantation experiments of a young French scientist, Dr. Alexis Carrel, who was working at the Rockefeller Institute in New York, and performing miracles in the way of changing the manifestations of sex in poultry and goats, brought me into touch with the late Professor Tuffier, of the Beaujon Hospital, a well-known surgeon, who was a friend of Carrel's. Tuffier, with his black beard and fiery, dark eyes was a character. The inventor of a new method of sewing the tiniest arteries together, he had applied himself to human grafting on the most daring and original lines. When a child of twelve or thirteen, who had been literally scalped by a machine in a textile factory at Lille, was brought to him, he covered her naked scalp—at intervals so as to allow for growth—with pieces of the scalp of an embryo which had failed to be born alive. According to the Professor, the experiment succeeded beyond all expectations and the child patient, who had formerly been blonde, sprouted a fine head of brown hair.

Another experiment of his, no less bold, was a disappointment. A wealthy Dutchman, who was a passionate violinist, had the misfortune to shatter the first joint of the index finger of his left hand in a shooting accident, as the result of which he had to forgo the pleasure of violin-playing. Having heard of Tuffier's human grafting, he came to Paris and offered the Professor any fee he liked to name if he could graft a fresh joint in the place of the shattered one. Tuffier agreed to do his best. Experiments with dead fingers supplied from the School of Anatomy having failed, he decided he would have to try and procure what he wanted from someone, preferably someone young and strong, who had just died. With this object, as he told me himself, he put himself in touch with the police. After a wait of several weeks he received a telephone message to say that an unknown foreigner had shot

himself, but half an hour before, in an obscure hotel near the Gare de l'Est. Within a few minutes Tuffier was on his way to the hotel in question and shortly after appeared before his Dutch patient, who had been notified in haste, bearing a still warm left index finger wrapped in cotton wool. The graft was a long and delicate business owing to the multiplicity of tiny arteries in the top of the fingers, but at last it was done. The joint however, failed to take: instead, it dried up and became mummified, so that regretfully the Professor had to remove it.

When Alexis Carrel came to Paris Tuffier sent for me to come to the Beaujon Hospital and be introduced. On inquiring for the Professor at the hospital, an attendant silently helped me into a white coat and thrust me into a stiflingly hot operating-room where I found the Professor engaged in performing an elaborate, and to me extremely revolting, internal operation. The future author of *Man, the Unknown*, arrived later and we had a long talk while the unconscious patient was removed and the nurses were cleaning up.

The Frenchman who made the strongest impression on me was Jean Jaurès, who fell a victim to the revolver of a half-crazed fanatic on the very eve of the War. He would have played a leading rôle in the making of the War and, above all, in the making of the peace: had he lived, he would have certainly checked the rise to dictatorial powers of Clemenceau, the evil genius of the Versailles Peace, for whose errors the world is still paying.

I first met Jaurès at a small luncheon given by my friend, Bessie van Vorst, an American widow living in Paris, who afterwards married the French Senator, Hugues Le Roux. Arnold Bennett and his wife, who was French, were the only guests at the luncheon, and we spoke French, for I do not think Jaurès spoke much English. We talked principally about the coal strike in England and I remember the delicately ironical tone in which Jaurès quoted J. L. Garvin as having written that the British coal strike was the greatest event in history since the French Revolution. Jaurès did

most of the talking: Arnold Bennett, as I recollect, said very little, which was unusual for him.

Jaurès had a beautiful voice: he was one of the finest orators in France. He was a great humanitarian and he had a passionate sense of justice: he was full of pity for what Franklin Roosevelt was to call 'the forgotten man'. Until I met him, I had thought of him merely as a Socialist agitator, such as I had heard orating at the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart in 1907, when the British Socialist, Harry Quelch, was expelled by the Würtemberg police for calling the Hague Peace Conference 'a thieves' kitchen' – (if only that aimless talking-shop of diplomacy had been half as purposeful as the term implied!).

But Jaurès quite captivated me that day at lunch, with his fine eyes and gentle manner and the pellucid clearness of his vision – he was so perspicaciously a sincere and honest man, and what is more, a great French patriot. I saw him once or twice again, surrounded by some of his collaborators on the *Humanité*; talking politics or reading proofs, at the table that was always reserved for him in the dingy old Café du Croissant, in the rue Montmartre, at the self-same table where the assassin's bullet was to strike him down.

If he had lived, history would have had to be re-written. There have not been many men of whom that could be said.

CHAPTER XIII

PORTUGAL IN REVOLUTION. THE TALE OF A SHOE

THE Portuguese Revolution of 1910, which cost King Manoel his throne, was the work of the Freemasons and the secret society known as the Carbonarios—if we are to believe Mrs. Anita Webster, the French Revolution owed its inception to similar sources. Actually, the Portuguese monarchy was several centuries out of date and a pretext for supporting at the public expense a decadent and worthless aristocracy. The Braganza dynasty fell like a ripe fruit. The Portuguese nation as a whole was entirely indifferent to it, just as, twenty years later, the Spaniards had grown indifferent to Alfonso XIII. In each case there was no particular ill-will to the monarch as long as he would get off the throne: when I was in Spain at Easter 1930, I was so struck by the similarity between the feeling towards the monarchy and that which I had found in Portugal in 1910 that I wrote a series of articles (in the *News-Chronicle*) predicting Alfonso's fall.

In that October night when the Portuguese fleet revolted and opened fire on the Palace of Necessidades, the only one of the family who played a man's part was old Queen Maria Pia, the King's grandmother. That evening King Manoel was entertaining at dinner a Brazilian field-marshal and rumours of trouble brewing reached him at table. I have seen the agitated note the monarch scribbled on the back of the white and gold menu-card to the major-domo: 'Please expedite the service.' The King had retired for the night when the first shots of the revolution fell: a few days later I stood in his bedroom as he had left it, with the bedclothes flung back from the bed, the French novel he was reading open beside

it, and on the chiffonière his eyeglass which the guide insisted on presenting to me and which I sent as a souvenir to my young woman in London—she wore it subsequently on the stage when playing opposite Granville Barker in Arthur Schnitzler's *The Wedding Morn* at the Palace.

Is it not the lesson of history that Queens, especially Queens Dowager, frequently display the spirit which the ruling monarch lacks? Queen Maria Pia, a most determined old lady—she was a daughter of that doughty sovereign, King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, 'il Re Galant' Uomo'—was stopping at Cintra, at La Penha, most romantically situated of castles on its perch on a lofty crag. The tragedy of her own son, Manoel's father and immediate predecessor, bluff Don Carlos, King Edward VII's friend, shot down with the Crown Prince in the street by assassins only two years before, had steeled in her the resolve to maintain the dynasty on the throne at all costs. The moment she heard the news of the revolution she was out of her bed and on the telephone to the King, imploring him not to flee, but to stay and face the music: I have seen the telephone, a wall instrument installed in a draughty corridor, where the old lady stood in her dressing-gown and reasoned with her grandson. 'What are the English doing?' the distracted young monarch asked. 'Why don't they send a warship?' which evoked from his grandmother's set lips the bitter rejoinder: 'My son, twice in my life I have depended on the English sending a warship, and both times they failed me.'

Nevertheless, the young King had his way. Together with the two dowager Queens he quitted Portugal that night and quitted it for ever. He returned only in death when, with a chivalrous gesture, the Portuguese Dictator, Oliveira de Salazar, allowed the King's remains to be brought back to Portugal from England, where Manoel died in exile. Portugal's last king now sleeps with his murdered father and brother and the rest of his forbears in the Royal burial-place at the Convent of São Vicente, in Lisbon.

At intervals, after the fall of the monarchy, there were sundry attempts at a restoration, and I made various hurried trips to Lisbon to be on the spot against the promised rising. But

all plots failed, chiefly, I think, because the King did not ever have his heart in the movement. He was a shrewd young man and knew when he was well off: also he realised, better than some of his followers, that the monarchy in Portugal was finished and that, to restore it, little effective support could be expected from the bulk of the aristocrats remaining in Portugal who, however much they might conspire in the Lisbon bars, were mainly concerned in conserving their personal fortunes and continuing to live without working.

In this King Manoel probably relied on the advice of his father's old friend, the Marquez de Soveral, a notable figure in Edwardian London. People used to laugh at 'The Blue Monkey', as he was nicknamed, with his dyed black hair and mustachios and bright blue frock-coats; for all that, he was an extremely intelligent person who, first, at the Portuguese Foreign Office, and later, as Portuguese Minister in London, played a prominent part in the Anglo-Portuguese discussions which regulated the partition of Africa in the days before the War and skilfully utilised Edward VII's feelings of warm friendship towards him to promote the interests of his small country, Britain's oldest ally. The Portuguese Revolution cost him his post and the greater part of his fortune, and, following close upon Edward VII's death, completed the wane of his social prestige.

But he bore these blows of fate with the equanimity of the great gentleman that he was. At the period when I knew him, in the years immediately preceding the War, he maintained a rather humble bachelor establishment in a street near Manchester Square. My usual appointment with him was for 11 a.m. and while he was completing the lengthy ritual of his toilet, I would wait in his sitting-room with its prodigious array of signed photographs of Royal personages, for the most part long since in their graves. When at long length he would appear he would be dressed for his daily walk down Bond Street, perfumed and corseted, with a flower in the buttonhole of his bright blue coat and the shiniest of toppers, and always a pair of spotless white gloves laid out for him in the hall.

I was touched to see the consideration which King George

always displayed towards his father's old friend. Even in the days of his eclipse, de Soveral was included in shooting parties at Sandringham, bidden to Court, asked to dine in private at the Palace. With a little air of well-bred indifference he would tell me of these invitations, but it was easy to see how deeply moved the old gentleman was. I have heard many instances of King George's knightly character, but none more tactful and kindly than the way he brightened the closing days of this old family friend.

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A day or two after the Portuguese Revolution I stepped out of the Sud Express, running hours late, in Lisbon, at three o'clock in the morning, in a silent and deserted city. Shell-holes gaped in the station façade and dead bodies still sprawled under the Judas trees of the Avenida de la Liberdade. There were no porters and I toted my own bag to the adjacent Avenida Palace Hotel which was wide open, without a servant of any kind in sight. I had the odd experience of walking upstairs, picking a room at random for myself and going to bed – (next day it turned out to be the Royal suite!)

Though it marked the end of a dynasty, by comparison with other revolutions, before and since, the Portuguese Revolution was pretty small beer. If I mention it at all, it is by way of introduction to a curious experience that befell me in Lisbon, as after-piece to a not unthrilling adventure. I have always discerned in life a certain co-ordinated pattern interlocking all our actions, so that no action a single individual performs is without its influence on the lives of all the rest. Every moment of our existence we are the unconscious tools of destiny; but there are moments when it looks almost as if destiny had pre-selected a given person to be on a given spot to perform a given service at a given time.

This was very much my case in the affair of St. Francis Xavier's sandal.

The revolution having been engineered by all the free-thinking elements of the nation (which in a continental country invariably implies anti-clericalism) the new Portuguese Republic started out with an avowed anti-religious character.

Priest-hunting and nun-baiting were the order of the day. One evening, while I was at dinner at the Café Martinho on the Rocio Square, people came running from all directions. 'Los padres, los padres!' they cried: the story was that the fathers of the great Jesuit college of Quelhas, not far from the centre of the city, were firing on the people from the tower of their church. I knew a little about Jesuits: all other considerations apart, I could not for a moment credit clerics of their intelligence and background, with being so singularly ill-advised as to provoke public opinion in its current inflamed state. Several cab-loads of patriots, brandishing rifles and revolvers, passing at this moment, I leaped unasked into one of the cabs and went off with them to investigate.

Quelhas, a large cluster of buildings grouped about a church and encircled by a high wall, presented an extraordinary spectacle when at length we reached it. There were cavalry and infantry all about: there were machine-guns: there were even field-pieces. And all this armada was blazing madly away at the college which, to judge by the silence reigning on the other side of the high white wall, was completely deserted. No matter. Shells went crashing into the tower, machine-guns rattled, rifle bullets whined and pattered among the trees. For how long this brisk bombardment was kept up, I am unable to say. It looked like being a long siege and I had spent but little time in bed since my arrival in Lisbon, so, picking a convenient resting-place on the running-board of a car, I lay down and, the racket notwithstanding, promptly fell asleep.

When I awoke the firing had ceased. There were voices beyond the wall – the troops were inside. Fearing that I should be stopped if I attempted to enter by the main gate, I started to climb the wall. I had got my hands on the coping when my legs were seized and I was dragged down to face a circle of chattering and gesticulating Portuguese soldiery. I should explain that my father had died in London but a month before and, as was the custom in those days, I was wearing a black suit and a black tie. This, taken in conjunction with the fact that I was clean-shaven, was enough for the patriots about me. I was clearly a Jesuit, a spy.

I had my passport, but none of my captors was able to read. I demanded to be brought before an officer, but no officer was forthcoming. I tried to explain that I was a British newspaper man, but my halting Portuguese failed to register. I then dragged out my English-Portuguese conversation book, but all I could turn up at that somewhat agitated moment was a sprightly dialogue about repairing a bicycle puncture. (*'Give me, please, the rubber solution, a patch, powdered chalk!'* *'With pleasure, sir!'*) Amid much excitement I was dragged to a group of Lancers, a rope was fastened about my hands, and, encircled by horsemen, in the most approved manner of the captured spy, I was marched the long road back to the centre of the city.

It was a lurid experience. We traversed a number of mean streets where groups of ragamuffins of both sexes, bunched at the street corners, howled imprecations at me. At one place a man ran under the horses and seizing me by the ears, pulled my head down to see if I had a tonsure – luckily for me, I have always been pretty well-thatched on top. It was long past midnight and I was completely at the mercy of a highly excitable mob which, filled with republican ardour, paraded the streets day and night: I felt like the star rôle in what the Wild West used to call 'a neck-tie party'.

I was glad to reach the headquarters of the Civil Government unscathed. It was a lucky chance for me that I had previously paid my respects to the Governor, who spoke English. I was put in the guard-room while he was advised (nobody ever seemed to go to bed in Lisbon in those days): I was brought before him, he recognised me and I was released with apologies.

(I might add that the *Petit Parisien* correspondent wired the news of my arrest to Paris and it appeared in the London evening papers next day, frightening the life out of my family.)

At liberty once more, the next thing was to return to Quelhas and discover what was going on. I found a taxi and reached the college as it was getting light. The place was wide open, the mob swarming everywhere. Looting was in full swing.

Quelhas was an important and entirely self-contained community, with its own workshops and printing-press, and even its own brewery, and there were grand pickings. I met whole families, men, women and children, coming away with every imaginable article – mattresses and bedding, cooking utensils, pictures, even furniture. The troops who were first in had evidently found some liquor: many of the soldiers and national guards were drunk.

In the church I witnessed scenes recalling episodes of the French Revolution. Drunken soldiers, draped in vestments, were at the altar, performing a mock celebration of the mass: others were going round knocking the heads off the statues. In the sacristy men and women were tearing the lace, some of it beautiful old lace, from the surplices. They cried to me, 'Everything belongs to the people! Help yourself!'

The community library was a wreck. The floor was strewn with books, some of them enormous black letter tomes of great age, from which pages had been ripped in handfuls. This last spectacle enraged me. Knowing the trend of the revolution, I realised it was useless to protest against sacrilege and desecration: I was a foreigner and if the Portuguese Republicans wanted to be anti-clerical, it was their right. But I knew what treasures some of these old monkish libraries contained; and I felt sure that an enlightened Liberal government would desire to conserve such a storehouse of knowledge as the Jesuit library of Quelhas for the benefit of science. On leaving the college, therefore, I drove straight to the house of Dr. Bernardino Machado, the Foreign Minister of the new Republic, routed him from his bed – it was seven o'clock in the morning – and told him what was going on. 'Your Excellency at least should save the books before it is too late,' I told him.

I had reckoned however without the ponderous pedantry of academic republicanism. His Excellency, a hale and hearty old gentleman with a large white beard, drew himself up in his pyjamas. 'The property of these miscreants is forfeit to the sovereign Portuguese people,' he declared with owlish solemnity. 'The people are in their right. I can do nothing. Good day!'



BOMB OUTRAGE—KING ALFONSO'S WEDDING PROCESSION, 1906

Ever since the French Revolution, our masters, the people, have made a lot of fun out of the traditional foolishness of rank and privilege, from Queen Marie Antoinette's probably apocryphal 'Let them eat cake!' to King August of Saxony's historic remark when told, in 1848, that revolution had broken out in Vienna, 'Aber dürfen Sie das?' (Is that allowed?) But in my experience the narrow-mindedness and obtuseness of academic Socialism, from the Fabians down to the Communists of to-day, their unwillingness to compromise and their 'inverted snobbery' as Rudyard Kipling once denounced it to me, run the dullards on the other side mighty close. Someone, preferably a Frenchman, could write a diverting satiric novel on this theme.

But to return to Quelhas. As I wandered in and out of the picaresque scenes I have described, I was hailed in excellent English by a sleek individual unexpectedly wearing an impeccable black morning coat girded with a belt from which a brace of automatic pistols hung in holsters. He informed me that he was a Lisbon business man, an officer of the National Guard and had at one time worked on the London Stock Exchange. Wouldn't I like a souvenir? — I had only to help myself. Everything belonged to the people.

I explained as tactfully as I might that I did not consider that looting fell within the functions of a foreign newspaper man. But presently we came to the Father Procurator's office, strewn, like every other room in the place, with articles which the mob had dropped or thrown away, and there on the floor I saw an old sandal lying. My curiosity was faintly aroused, for only friars wear sandals, and the Jesuits are not friars. So I stooped and picked up the sandal.

It was very large and obviously well-worn, although it was in good repair. A fragment of paper yellowed with age was gummed on the inside of the sole. I read, 'Esto zapato e de San Francisco Xaver.'

I turned to my escort. 'It says here in Spanish that this is St. Francis Xavier's shoe,' I told him. He shrugged his shoulders indifferently. 'We Portuguese are no longer interested in saints and such rubbish,' he informed me loftily. 'But Francis

Xavier was not only a great saint,' I protested. 'He was a famous traveller, the first European missionary to visit Japan, and a man of tremendous courage and character.'

I glanced at the sandal curiously, wondering whether it could really be authentic – the circumstances in which it had come to light suggested as much. I did not know a great deal about St. Francis Xavier except that, apart from his saintly reputation, his career had been one of incredible adventure and that, after planting missions all through India and the Far East, worn out by fever and hardships, he had died in complete abandonment on an obscure Chinese island, his body being subsequently transferred to Goa where it reposes in a magnificent shrine. The sacred aspect of this relic of one who, together with St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder, is revered as one of the two great saints of the Jesuit Order, did not occur to me then. My interest was stirred rather by the historical link with one of civilisation's greatest pioneers, known to history as 'The Apostle of the Indies': I did not realise then, as I was to realise twenty years later, that in all probability the stout leather sole resting on my palm had actually trod the forbidden soil of far Cathay. I said to my escort, 'You told me I might take a souvenir. I'd like to have this old shoe, if you don't want it,' to which, with languid contempt, my companion replied, 'Please yourself!'

So I thrust the sandal under my coat. My thought was that my mother, as a good Catholic, would value a genuine historical relic of a great saint. On returning to the hotel, I put the sandal in my suitcase and there it remained, tucked away among my shirts and pyjamas, until I found time to procure a shoe-box from the valet and dispatched it to my mother in London.

The rest I only heard later. My mother was greatly impressed with the gift which she showed about among her Catholic friends. The result was that one day she received the visit of a Jesuit father who explained that the sandal was one of the greatest treasures of the Jesuit Order and summarily demanded its return.

But that was no way to talk to an Irishwoman. My parent replied firmly that the sandal was her property, having been

presented to her by her son who had received it as a gift from the Portuguese authorities as part of the confiscated property of the Church: a demand was one thing, a request, another. Later, two emissaries from the Vicar-General of the Jesuits in Rome presented themselves. They were much more conciliatory. They said that the sandal was one of the few remaining personal relics of the saint and had been preserved for centuries at Quelhas as one of the Portuguese Jesuits' most valued possessions. They asked that, as an act of grace, the sandal should be restored to the Order, promising in return that my mother and I should be gratefully remembered in their prayers.

On that my mother capitulated. But one of my sisters, with a woman's practical sense, thinking that a memento of this august relic should remain in the family, took an old razor blade and shaved a small sliver of leather off the welt. When I was in London for Christmas my mother told me the story; but, still not absolutely certain in my mind as to the sandal's authenticity, I could not help reflecting that maybe the tale had become a little exaggerated in the telling.

Twenty years elapsed. In the year 1930 my wife and I visited the Seville Exhibition. One of its principal buildings was devoted to the work of the Spanish missionaries through the ages, an extraordinarily interesting display. The largest hall was dedicated to the life and work of the first and greatest of the missionaries, St. Francis Xavier. In the centre, raised high in honour and contained in silver reliquaries were four personal relics of the saint, brought from the Reliquary of the Chapel Royal at Madrid—his crucifix, his biretta, his staff, and his sandal.

Something told me immediately that it was my old shoe. In a state of incredulous bewilderment I approached the dais. The relic was bedded on crimson velvet and enshrined in glass and silver, but it was the sandal of Quelhas right enough—the yellowing paper tab still adhered to the inside of the sole and, God bless me, I could see the mark on the welt where my sister Hyacinth had plied her blade. I learned subsequently that, as the saint lay dying in a wretched hovel on the island of Chang-chuen-sang, off the coast of Canton, the only person

present, besides his native servant, was the Dutch skipper of a Chinese junk, with whom Xavier had arranged to sail to Canton in a last effort to get permission to land on the Chinese mainland. Even in his lifetime Xavier's reputation for saintliness was established, even with the buccaneers and cut-throats with whom he so often was obliged to take ship on his travels, and when he expired, the Dutch skipper appropriated his sandals as a memento of the holy man. One of these seems to have found its way to Quelhas.

It is strange that, of all the hundreds of people who streamed through the College of Quelhas that day, the sandal should have fallen into the hands of one who, through his background and upbringing, might have been relied on to preserve it for posterity. To get even a passing glimpse of Fate pulling the strings that make us poor puppets dance is rather an awe-inspiring experience.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GATHERING STORM. VIENNA 1912

YEARS ago, at Reuter's, when the Conservative Government was in power and seemed set indefinitely, we used to amuse ourselves in the watches of the night by drawing up lists of a probable Opposition Cabinet and comparing them. Lloyd George, the great War Premier, is a senior statesman now, but I remember the howls of ribald laughter which greeted his name on somebody's list, modestly earmarked for the Board of Trade. The period was early in 1902. When I lived in Paris before the War I sometimes had occasion to call at the offices of *Comédia*, the theatrical daily. The *secrétaire de la rédaction*, or News Editor, as we should call it, was a vague, rather untidy man, who did dramatic criticisms on the side. His name was Léon Blum.

Fate is capricious. It can be magnificently generous: it can also prove itself wantonly unkind. How inscrutable the destiny which decreed that the youngest of a Scottish peer's large family should become Queen of England, as the climax of a series of events quite beyond the power of the most imaginative novelist to invent! When I was in Vienna during the first Balkan war Hitler was hanging his wall-paper and as recently as the Cannes Conference of 1920 Mussolini was an Italian newspaper correspondent so little considered that he had his visiting-card sent back to him when he called to see the chief British delegate, Mr. Lloyd George. In my years of life I have seen too many ironical contrasts, too many high hopes blasted, ever to have cherished any serious desire to peer into the future. With a sense of relief I echo Pope:

'Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page proscrib'd, their present state.'

In New York, in the year 1934, Kermit Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt's second son, gave a lunch at his house for his boy Kim's classmates in the Sixth Form at Groton. We lunched at small tables, each presided over by one of our host's men friends. I presided at one, Prince Louis Ferdinand, the ex-Kaiser's grandson, who had lately been working for Henry Ford, at another, the late Arthur Brisbane, Hearst's star writer, at a third, Raymond L. Dittmars, the great naturalist and authority on reptiles, at a fourth. As I was leaving after the lunch, Prince Louis Ferdinand came out of the house behind me and, discovering that we were headed in the same direction, we walked along together. As we went I said to the Prince, 'When I was a very young man I witnessed the State entry into Berlin of your parents, the Crown Prince and his bride, the Grand Duchess Cecilie. I've a particular reason for remembering the occasion for I was stung by a mosquito that day and late at night was rushed to hospital in delirium with a poisoned arm and a high fever. If anyone had told me that evening that twenty-nine years later I should be strolling down Fifth Avenue in New York with the Crown Prince's son, I should have said that not I but he was raving.'

The Prince, who is a democratic-minded young man, laughed and said simply, 'There have been many changes.'

When I lived in Berlin I constantly saw the Crown Prince, Prince Louis Ferdinand's father, dashing about in his fast sports car, riding in the Tiergarten or strolling about in the paddock of a Sunday afternoon at Hoppegarten races. But I never encountered him or any of his brothers at the dancing places – the Emperor, not to speak of the extremely puritanical Empress, would never have stood for that – and such love-affairs as the Royal sons indulged in were kept carefully out of sight.

Nevertheless, Emperor and Crown Prince were a perpetual thorn in one another's sides. Crown Prince William suffered at the hands of the monarch, his father, as Crown Princes have always suffered – compare the relations between the Emperor Francis Joseph and the Crown Prince Rudolf; between the old German Emperor, William I, and the Crown Prince

Frederick; between Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII.

The German Crown Prince himself contributed not a little to the disharmony existing between him and his sire by his irresponsible nature. But all Crown Princes find themselves in the same quandary. In the nature of things the Heir Apparent is denied the chance of revealing any real qualities he may possess—Edward VIII, in his triumphal career as Prince of Wales, was a rare exception. If the Crown Prince displays an intelligent interest in politics, he is immediately suspect to the Crown, always fearful of the formation of a 'Crown Prince party' and a target for all the parasites that bask in the sunshine of majesty: if he shuns politics and amuses himself as he best knows how, he is rated irresponsible, a play-boy, and is the perpetual butt of parental admonition. Monarchs are consistently jealous of their heirs, if they do not positively dislike them, as was the case between the old Emperor Francis Joseph and his nephew and appointed successor, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. During my time in Berlin echoes of angry scenes between William II and his firstborn were always reaching my ears: as the result of one such interview, the young man was banished in disgrace to Danzig—if I remember rightly, for having ridden in an officer's steeplechase in defiance of the Kaiser's orders.

In William II, his brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, and in William II's sons, the same strain of self-will which led Edward VIII, virtually unadvised, to the tragic decision of December 11, 1936, is clearly discernible. This strain was handed down, of course, by Queen Victoria, who inherited it from her father, one of that unruly band, the Wicked Uncles, and, in the case of the Kaiser, passed it on through her daughter, the Empress Frederick, that very determined lady who did not hesitate to match her woman's strength against the mighty Bismarck. With all his admirable qualities George V was, after all, Queen Victoria's grandson, and, like his Royal grandmother, something of a tyrant in the home. He was brought up in the stern traditions of discipline of the Royal Navy and he ruled his sons with a short rein and an even shorter temper,

in the authentic spirit of the old quarter-deck. Psycho-analysts know something of the after-effects on character of iron repression in childhood.

At the end of March 1915, when I was spending some time at G.H.Q. at St. Omer, as the guest of Sir John French, I met the Prince of Wales, then acting as A.D.C. to the British Commander-in-Chief, on several occasions at dinner. He was not then twenty-one, although he seemed younger. The Prince struck me as being a naturally lively character but given to reverie – I fancy he was rather overawed by the atmosphere of the C.-in-C.'s mess. But once he overcame his shyness he had plenty to say. The first night I dined he was complaining bitterly that he had not yet seen a shell burst, although he had spent three days on the Belgian front at Furnes.

'What I want,' he exclaimed, leaning forward eagerly, 'what I want is to see a shell burst at a hundred yards.' 'One burst nearer than that, Prince,' said Lord Claud Hamilton, who had been with him. 'Yes, but, dash it, I never saw it!' declared the Prince mournfully. Captain Baird (the present Lord Stonehaven) interjected that the Prince would have seen plenty of shells if he had been at Furnes that day for the Germans had shelled the town, killing seven people, at which our future monarch seemed much downcast.

The Prince's visit to the Belgian trenches seemed to have been fairly grotesque. He was solemnly conducted to a dug-out, specially constructed for him and labelled 'Châlet du Prince de Galles', where during lunch, a portly Belgian tenor sang 'God Save the King' in English (two verses). In the middle of it a shell burst noisily outside, but the singer carried on gallantly through the national hymns of Belgium and France, winding up with the Russian National Anthem.

One evening, when the Bishop of London was dining, the name of Prince Yusupoff, who had recently visited G.H.Q. as the Tzar's envoy, was mentioned. The Bishop remarked that Yusupoff had called on him in London. 'Did he bring you a decoration, Bishop?' the Prince of Wales wanted to know. 'Indeed he did,' the cleric replied. 'He brought His Royal Highness one, too,' said Sir John French, with a twinkle in his

eyes that presaged a story. 'Did he, sir,' said the bishop, all attention. 'Yes,' answered the Prince, 'but I don't remember exactly what it was like, except that it was red and hung down here,' – he pointed to the breast of his Grenadier tunic. 'I wrote to the King and told him that Prince Yusupoff had given me a medal and the King sent me quite an annoyed letter back – you know how particular he is about decorations and things – to say that at my age I ought to know the difference between a medal and a cross. So I opened the case again, and I'm blown if it wasn't a cross!'

Another evening after dinner, in the A.D.C.'s room, the Prince drew me aside. 'Here's something for you,' he said mysteriously, 'rather a funny letter from a friend of mine in the *Collingwood* – I'm going to read it to Captain Hodges (the British naval attaché in Paris who was dining that night). The letter told of the adventure of the skipper of a British collier which left the Tyne for the Elbe on August 3rd (1914), the day before Britain's declaration of war against Germany ('just to show you what skunks some people are,' the writer declared feelingly, meaning the owners). The German pilot who came on board in the Elbe said to the British captain, 'You've just arrived in time, skipper. Your coal will come in handy for our High Seas Fleet. War was declared last night.' 'Oh, was it?' retorted the Tynesider. 'Well, take that, you sausage-eating son of a bitch,' and he brought his telescope down as hard as he could on the pilot's head, at the same time ordering the helm to be put hard to port, and the vessel's nose to be turned to the open sea. Next day the collier arrived back in the Tyne, with her cargo intact, an elate skipper and a battered and depressed German pilot locked up secure in the chart-house.

Ah me, against my better judgment, I am conscious of a gentle glow of satisfaction at the recollection of these fugitive contacts with Royal personages. One of the basic reasons for the failure of Communism to date is man's perpetual striving to rise above his class and I suppose the measure of a fellow's success in life is gauged to some extent by the doors he is able

to storm. But it has always been with a sense of unreality, remembering the small boy riding his bicycle about Notting Hill or that young man drinking beer with the evening staff from Reuter's in the taverns round the Mansion House, that I have found myself talking with a Royal Highness or the guest of a duke.

When the great Rachel first appeared in London, Royalty made a great fuss of the star. Returning to the members of her company assembled at her hotel after an evening at Buckingham Palace, she flung her shawl on a couch and exclaimed, '*Ah, mes amis, que j'ai besoin de me désenducailler!*' So, following the divine Phèdre's lead, let me, in my turn, 'de-duke' myself, and get all the Royalties off my chest in this one chapter.

I once travelled up the Nile as far as Wady Halfa on the same stern-wheeler as Crown Prince, now King Leopold of Belgium, who was bound for the Sudan on a shooting trip. At that time (1923) the future King was a handsome but grave young man, rather taciturn and interested in Oriental philosophy. Still, he liked a story I told him about an old lady who met a tinker mending pots in a country lane. She said to the tinker, 'Are you copper-bottoming 'em, my man?' and the tinker replied, 'No, I'm aluminiuming 'em, mum!' This tongue-twister greatly tickled H.R.H. and all the way up to Halfa he walked about the boat, practising it.

The Prince was travelling under the wing of Colonel Watson, known all through the East as 'Jimmie' Watson, who for years was A.D.C. to the late Khedive, Abbas Hilmi. Colonel Watson once scored off me rather well. One lovely sunny morning, when we were both stopping at the Winter Palace Hotel at Luxor, I met him in the lift on his way to breakfast. Now at Luxor it does not rain once in three years and the sun shines almost every day, but this did not prevent me from saying brightly, 'Fine morning, Colonel!' Watson replied cheerfully, 'I feel like answering you in the words of the colonel in India to the subaltern, just out from home, who made the same remark to him at breakfast. The colonel growled back, "The weather's all right: it's the people you meet!"'

From that day to this, once South of Cairo, I have never commented to anyone on the fairness of the morning!

Do those who are doomed to die by violence bear the mark upon them? In many instances I think they do. I am unable to specify what the mark is more exactly than to describe it as a sort of unhappy look; but I have had some curious examples of presentiments of mine about certain people proving true, especially in the War.

One night, when I was in the Irish Guards, serving with the Reserve Battalion at Warley, I was explaining this idea of mine to a brother subaltern, Neville Marshall, by name, as we sat yarnning over the fire in his room in barracks, and he proposed that we should test it out in the case of our brother officers doing duty at Warley. Let us go through the list, name by name, and decide between ourselves which of them, in our opinion, would come through the War alive – our conversation took place early in 1916. I demurred – the suggestion seemed to me unlucky; but Marshall insisted.

He was a strange fellow. He had originally studied medicine but had eventually taken his degree as a vet. A soldier of fortune, he had served with the Spaniards in Morocco, with the Bulgars against the Turk, and, before coming to us, with the Belgians in the early part of the War. Or so he claimed. Some of his stories about himself were so wild that it was hard to say when he was telling the truth; but he wore two lines of medal ribbons and something like ten wound stripes. Like me, it interested him to study people, and we often compared notes on the characters of our brother officers. He was an excellent psychologist with a rare intuitive insight into the workings of the human mind and the failings of human nature: if we were to make this rather macabre test, I could not think of anyone better qualified than him to share it with me.

I am prepared not to be believed, but the fact is that, as events proved, we were right in every case except one – in that solitary instance, I picked wrong. We did not act solely on presentiment, but often judged from the character of the man under review that over a period of months, maybe years, he was scarcely likely to survive the slaughter. In several instances,

however, we found ourselves in mutual agreement that So-and-so *looked* as though he would be killed. When we had gone all through the list, Marshall's eyes met mine. 'What about us?' he demanded in his brisk way.

I said, 'For God's sake, old boy, leave us out of it!' But he would not be put off. 'I can tell you right away,' he said, 'you'll get through the War all right. But what about me?' 'You've been through so many wars,' I answered. 'You'll get through this one.' 'Rot!' he replied. 'I want your honest opinion. Come on, out with it! You think I'll be killed, don't you?'

Well, I did. He was of the Musketeer type, a braggart, sensational, but entirely without fear, the sort of man that, all through history, has always died by violence. You could tell Marshall anything: he was no more afraid of the truth than of shells as I discovered afterwards when we were under fire together at Ypres. 'Well, if you want to know,' I told him, 'I do. But the whole thing's nonsense, anyway!'

He shook his head, but quite cheerfully. 'I shall be killed,' he said. 'I've known it all along. You see if I'm not right. About you, too!'

Marshall probably forgot all about our conversation; but it recurred to my mind more than once during the rest of the War. A fellow of his temperament was a square peg in the round hole of Guards discipline and after he had been wounded with us, he transferred to the Line and eventually commanded a Lancashire battalion. He was killed a few days before the Armistice, rallying his men with extraordinary gallantry at the crossing of the St. Quentin Canal and given a posthumous Victoria Cross. His adjutant on that occasion was Harold Pemberton, my old friend Sir Max Pemberton's son, who had been on the *Daily Mail* with me and was afterwards to lose his life in a flying accident as a reporter on the *Daily Express*. He, too, covered himself with glory and received the D.S.O.

During the brief period of hostilities in the Second Balkan War in 1913, I messed for a week or so on a mountain top in Macedonia with the then Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia,

at the headquarters of the First Serbian Army. I will not pretend that I read in the face of the future King of Yugoslavia any hint of the tragic end awaiting him, so many years later, at the hands of a Croat assassin at Marseilles. But this almost swarthy young man – he was no more than twenty-four at that time – with his heavy jaw and the air of a student had a strange regard. There was a fatalistic look in the large brown eyes behind the pince-nez he always wore which must have presaged his highly dramatic career. Called to take the place as Heir-Apparent of his elder brother, the Crown Prince George, who was half mad – in that campaign I came face to face with him once on a Macedonian road, glaring at me with burning eyes through the window of a mud-splashed diligence – he was to take part in three wars, see his country ravaged by the foe and lead the remnants of the army in full retreat, before eventually mounting the throne in fulfilment of all Serbian dreams as King of a restored, of the Greater, Serbia.

I remember him as a square-built, rather untidy youth in uniform, erect at the map-table in his tent and flicking at the myriads of flies that plagued us in the Macedonian hills while he explained the operations of the Army. For the most part he wore an abstracted air, as short-sighted people often do, and at meals spoke little, preferring to listen to the conversation of the officers about him, a gentle, courteous, dignified young man. Sometimes after dinner, someone would start a game of 'chemmy', but the Prince had always retired to work before the gambling began; at whatever hour I went to bed, there was usually a light in his tent.

If any man should have borne on him the mark of death, not only his own, but that of millions of human beings, it was the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. As I have already stated, the old Emperor disliked him heartily and the Archduke's public appearances were rare during the months I spent in Vienna. Actually I set eyes on him only once and that was in London, when he had come over to stay with the Duke of Portland at Welbeck, probably to visit the gardens – the Archduke was a keen horticulturist and his roses at Schloss Konopischt were famous.

One Sunday morning, in the year before the War, I went to Mass at Spanish Place. In the seat immediately in front of me was a man in a black frock coat and yellow gloves, rather a thick-set, pallid individual with hair cut *en brosse* and light blue eyes – I first noticed him because of the meticulous devotion with which he followed the Divine Office. It was the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and he was alone.

Writing of Jaurès in an earlier chapter, I observed that there were few men of whom it could be said that, had they lived, history would have to be re-written. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand was unquestionably one of these. The Serbian Black Hand had him assassinated because they feared that, when he came to the throne, his policy of 'Trialismus', of giving the Southern Slav subjects of the Empire a larger share in the Government, would prove a fatal bar to the realisation of the dream of a Greater Serbia. I have often speculated – as, I imagine, to the end of all time all men will speculate – what would have happened if the police arrangements had been less characteristically inefficient and the Archduke had returned safe and sound from Serajevo that hot June Sunday, June 28, 1914, the feast of St. Veit, the Serbian national saint.

In the autumn of 1912, the 'cloud no bigger than a man's hand' – to quote the *cliché* beloved of the old leader-writers, the three-decker boys – which, year after year, with the greatest regularity, would appear on the Balkan horizon, was at last a black reality. The Balkan Powers, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, with the blessing of the Great White Father (who had his eye on Constantinople), had formed a League to fight the Turk. Europe had scraped through the Tangier crisis, the Casablanca crisis, the Agadir crisis (the sharpest alert of all, when the Germans, still stabbing at the Entente Cordiale, dispatched the warship *Panther* to Agadir, in support of German concessions in Southern Morocco, and had to be bought off by the French with a substantial slice of the Congo) without war, but by October 1912 the long shadows of a general outbreak once more darkened the European scene. At an hour's notice I was rushed to Vienna 'for a few weeks': the fact

that the 'few weeks' were drawn out to half a year in the almost daily expectancy that Austria-Hungary, backed by her German ally, would move against the successful Balkan Powers and precipitate a European War, shows for how long the menace to world peace persisted.

I had never been in Vienna. London, Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, Lisbon and Madrid I had worked in. Now Vienna. I was on the threshold of my twenty-ninth birthday; I felt I was learning my job. I reached Vienna a day or two before hostilities broke out and presently the war correspondents came clattering through, with their saddles, and tents, and packing-cases of stores. All the Old Guard were there, veterans of the Egyptian, the South African, the Russo-Japanese campaigns — Bennet Burleigh, Melton Prior, Lionel James, H. W. Nevinston, Martin Donahoe, William Maxwell, Ashmead-Bartlett — who after a brief stop to buy the admirable Austro-Hungarian General Staff maps of the scene of hostilities vanished into the fog of war. I did not realise as, with envy in my heart, I speeded them on their way that the war correspondent of the old type, as depicted in Kipling's 'The Light that Failed', was taking his last bow. As a matter of fact, in the upshot, most of them were carefully segregated by the Bulgars at Stara Zagora or Mustapha Pasha and saw precious little of the fighting. Ashmead-Bartlett, who had brought along his brother, Seabury (he succeeded after to the bulk of the Burdett-Coutts fortune) attached himself, with better judgment, to the Turks. Subsequently, with characteristic pluck and enterprise, he broke away from the routed army and sent the *Daily Telegraph* the finest dispatch of the War. Its cost (it ran to many columns) must have been a shock to the amiable Lord Burnham, the *Daily Telegraph's* proprietor at that time, but it was a magnificent journalistic feat.

It is one of the satisfactions of my life that I was able to visit both Vienna and St. Petersburg in the heyday of their brilliance before that brilliance was extinguished for ever. The ancient racial hatred between the Habsburg monarchy and the Slav made the atmosphere of Vienna electric. There were scenes

of intense patriotic fervour that winter of 1912 in the restaurants and cafés when, as happened several times each evening, the orchestra swung into the stirring strains of the *Prinz Eugen Lied* or the *Radetsky March*. I have seen officers in uniform on their feet waving their napkins and acclaiming in song the capture of Belgrade by the fearless Eugen who

‘liess schlagen einen Brücken,
Dass man künnt’ hinüberrücken
In die Festung Belgrad.’

I went to the Reichsrath, the Austrian Parliament, and watched the Southern Slav deputies deploy obstructionist tactics which put the old Irish Party in the House of Commons to shame. One inventive (and indefatigable) gentleman contrived to speak for twenty-six hours. He achieved this feat by reciting for hours on end those interminable epics commemorating the exploits of Serbia’s legendary heroes. I was much diverted by the spectacle of one of his colleagues feeding him grapes, one by one, what time the orator, carefully nursing his voice, mumbled bravely on, strophe by strophe, the ‘Lament for Kossovo’.

I realised the truth of Metternich’s remark that Austria-Hungary was merely a geographical expression on discovering that at the Central Telegraph Office the multiplicity of tongues spoken by the subjects of Francis Joseph involved the maintenance of a staff of censors familiar with about a dozen languages. I was delighted with the city, so much more grandiose than Berlin, with the eager life of the streets, as bright and as colourful as Paris, more civilised and much less provincial than Berlin, with the splendid shops of the Graben and the Kärntner-Strasse. And I found the people, from the highest to the lowest, endowed with a combination of natural good manners and a gently ironical attitude towards life, which appealed to me as the highest form of urbanity in its original meaning, the condition of living in a city.

Yet from the very first I was conscious of a faintly stagnant air in Vienna. It seemed to me that no one took heed of the future, only of the present and the past, in this elegant, care-free



RETREAT OF THE TURKISH ARMY DURING THE BALKAN WAR, 1912

capital. There was a lot of political talk, and lengthy articles in the Press on foreign affairs, couched in the involved and contorted German employed by the Jewish hacks who wrote most of the newspapers. Great events were in train on the monarchy's very doorstep; the Viennese were not perturbed. The Balkan States, each seething with schemes of aggrandisement at the expense of the Dual Monarchy, were welding their swords in the furnace of a successful war: what matter so long as the sun shone over Vienna and friends were waiting for *Schmause* at the *Kaffeehaus*? I had the feeling that the glittering shops and crowded cafés and theatres, the smart taxis rapidly ousting the old '*Zweispänner*', the busy and ubiquitous trams, were merely the new façade behind which a building hoary with age was inexorably crumbling into dust. A charming, intelligent but invertebrate race, of whom a clever woman has said, '*Les Autrichiens n'ont jamais tort, mais sont toujours battus.*'

One of the most typical Viennese scenes I witnessed was the funeral of the Archduke Rainer. The Archduke was a cousin of the Emperor's and a very old man, who lived in a shabby old palace and used to amuse himself by pottering about the streets and talking broad Viennese to any of his cronies he might chance to meet. One of his favourite haunts was the market-place near his palace, where he would chat with the market women, give pennies to the children and chuck the babies under the chin—in short, a kindly, simple, lovable old man. I happened to be near this market, the winter night they removed his body for burial with the full ceremonial of the Austrian Court, with a glass coach, lamps tied up in crape, lackeys on foot, plumes, hatchments, everything. The market-folk had turned out in strength to pay the last honours to their old friend. All the stalls were crape-hung and every stall had its lighted taper. It was bitter cold that night and the snow lay deep: the effect of all those candles lighting up the macabre cortège of black-draped horses and flunkies bearing glass and silver flambeaux wreathed in crape, like a visitation from another century, was bizarre in the extreme. Notwithstanding the snow on the ground, all the market women dropped on

their knees as the procession went by and made the sign of the cross.

While in such manifestations as this and in the outlook of its inhabitants upon life, Vienna was different from any capital I knew, still, like St. Petersburg, even more alien and bizarre, which I was to visit the following year, it was definitely part of the European scheme. That is to say, thought flowed freely from nation to nation—even, under the growth of Liberal influences between Russia and the rest of the world. Europe was divided into autocracies and democracies, true, but international law still ran and we all played the game, more or less according to the same rules. I find this to be the outstanding difference between the Europe of the pre-War years and the Europe of to-day. To-day the European capitals are closer than ever before, but community of thought is everywhere blocked by arid patches where dictatorship is forcing men's minds to a given national standard.

The old Emperor, then in his seventy-sixth year, never showed himself in public and only rarely at a Court function. He led a placid, methodical existence, rising at 4 a.m. and going to bed at 8 p.m. The constant companion of his old age was his elderly lady friend of long standing, Frau Schratt, of whom Prince Philip Eulenburg once wrote (1899) when German Ambassador to Austria-Hungary: 'On Goluchowski (the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister), Frau Schratt and myself the whole Triple Alliance depends at this time.' The vast Hofburg, with its series of courts, and archways and staircases, like a palace in a fairy-tale, was a place of splendid desolation which came to life only briefly towards noonday when the Deutschmeister Regiment marched in to change guard and its band awoke all the echoes with the noble strains of the Austrian National Hymn.

I had a glimpse of Francis Joseph only once and that in circumstances sufficiently curious to be worth recounting. It was on one of my later visits to Vienna, in the spring of 1914, when the aged Emperor fell seriously ill and for a time seemed likely to die. By the time I reached Vienna the crisis was past: nevertheless, I took the train straight out to Schönbrunn,

where the monarch was staying, and spent the night at the hotel. First thing next morning – it was not much more than seven o'clock and a heavenly spring day – I was up and went for a stroll in the grounds of the Schloss. At that hour there was no one about: I had the delightful rococo park to myself. I was passing the so-called Cabinet-Garten, which I knew was adjacent to the Emperor's quarters, when I caught sight of a head at a window. It was a bewhiskered old gentleman in a Paisley smoking-cap, his elbows comfortably propped on a cushion placed on the sill, smoking with evident enjoyment one of those long cigars pierced by a straw which the Viennese call 'Virginia'.

It was the Emperor. I was so close, on the other side of the garden hedge, that if I had whistled he must have heard me. But I did nothing, so overtaken by surprise was I, and presently he was called in – at any rate, the head was withdrawn and the window closed.

The late Countess Hoyos, an Englishwoman by birth, a daughter of that Whitehead who had the torpedo factory at Fiume, made me very welcome in Vienna. Her deceased husband was a Hungarian, an intimate friend of the Crown Prince Rudolf, and one of the few repositories of the true facts of the Mayerling tragedy. Her son, Alec Hoyos, who was in the Austro-Hungarian Diplomatic Service, was private secretary to Count Berchtold, the Foreign Minister. One of her daughters married Herbert Bismarck, the great Bismarck's elder son, so that she was the grandmother of the present Prince Bismarck, who was for so long at the German Embassy in London.

Countess Hoyos told me an odd story about her grandson. When the first Prince Bismarck was Imperial Chancellor a crank armed with a brace of old-fashioned, one-barrel pistols, took a shot at him. The shot went wide, the miscreant was apprehended, and Bismarck begged the pistols from the police as a souvenir. They hung on the wall in the hall at Friedrichsruh, the Prince's estate. Years after, young Otto von Bismarck, the present Prince, was playing with another small

boy at Friedrichsruh. The Prince's companion took down one of the would-be assassin's pistols from its place on the wall and, pointing it at young Otto, pulled the trigger. There was a deafening explosion and a bullet whizzed past the little Prince's head. Nobody had thought of unloading the fellow of the pistol discharged at the Reichskanzler, and the bullet, intended for the grandfather, was within an ace of killing the grandson more than a quarter of a century later.

In Vienna Countess Hoyos was British of the British; but when she came to England, which she did every season, she was apt to become distinctly pro-German, a phenomenon which I have remarked before in Englishwomen who marry out of their own race. She was the most entertaining and hospitable of hostesses and I frequently lunched and dined at her apartment, where one encountered most of Vienna society. An Austrian countess, whom I used to meet there, told me an eerie story about her family ghost. The countess had an old Schloss on the Danube, a feature of which was a covered arcade very beautifully lined with Italian tiles. It was supposed to be haunted by the spectre of an ancestress who, her face thickly veiled, paced the arcade at night, wringing her hands and weeping.

The story was that this ancestress was born with a terrible facial disfigurement, in consequence of which she never showed herself except heavily veiled. To secure greater privacy she brought artisans from Italy and built the majolica arcade where she was wont to walk in all weathers. Then a new bailiff was appointed, a handsome young man with an eye to the main chance. He made ardent love to the veiled lady, begging her to let him see her without her veil and protesting that, no matter how hideously disfigured she was, his feelings would never change. At length she let herself be persuaded and raised her veil. But one look at the features it concealed was enough for the suitor – with a shriek of horror he dashed away and was never seen again. For weeks the veiled lady paced the arcade, weeping bitterly and hoping against hope that her lover would return. When at length she realised that he was lost to her for ever, she crept to the arcade at dead of

night and hanged herself from a beam: the Countess assured me that the mark of the rope could still be seen. Since then her poor veiled ghost still walks by night and deploras her lost love: many people, the Countess declared, had seen her.

Amy Castles, the Australian coloratura soprano, a friend of my wife's, was singing at the Opera when I was in Vienna—Butterfly, Mimi, La Reine de Saba. She and her sister, Eileen who had toured Australia with Melba in grand opera, in rôles like Musetta in *Bohème* and Micaela, in *Carmen*, kept house together. Notwithstanding her long experience of stage and concert work, Amy was always prostrated with nerves when she had to appear and spent the day in bed on such occasions. I would go and sit with her and hear her part from the score, which is one way of adding to one's knowledge of the operas.

Another friend of mine was Reynaldo Hahn, the French composer, who was on a visit to Vienna. We used to go bum-meling round the night-clubs together and sometimes, when the dawn was nigh and the company thinning out, he would sit down at the piano and play for us: on one such occasion, at the earnest request of the gipsy orchestra leader, he sang for a little group of us to his own accompaniment his famous song '*Si mes vers avaient des ailes*', which no one renders so charmingly as its composer. Once, when he was dining with me and two women friends, he asked us to guess where he was born. When we all had had a try and failed, he told us—Caracas, capital of Venezuela. Whereupon Lady Cuninghame, the wife of the British military attaché, who was one of the women present, said, 'And who can guess where I was born?' 'Fiji,' I hazarded, purely at random. 'Right,' she said. It turned out that her father had been Governor of Fiji and that she was born there during his term of office.

CHAPTER XV

HENRY WILSON, SOLDIER, STRATEGIST, POLITICIAN

WALKING up St. James's Street after lunch on June 22, 1922, I bumped into my former Colonel in the Irish Guards, that lion-hearted old gentleman and eminent man of letters the late Sir John Hall. In the high voice which was so characteristic of him he piped, 'Wilson's been assassinated!' 'President Wilson?' I said. 'President Wilson be damned!' declared Sir John heartily. 'It's Henry Wilson I'm speaking about. Two of these bloody Sinn Feiners – it has just come through on the tape at the Turf Club.'

Henry Wilson was one of those people whom it is impossible to imagine dead. He loved life, he loved a joke, he loved pulling strings, he loved power. He was a mass of contradictions and prejudices. He adored his friends, ignored his enemies, reserving his hatred for collective expressions like the Southern Irish, Ulsterman that he was, and politicians as a class. I am quite certain that he was always better disposed towards the Germans than towards these, his particular bugaboos. With his ugly face (which he liked to joke about) and queer, unbalanced eyes, he looked like Mephistopheles and very often acted like Mephistopheles, although he could behave like an angel. He was argumentative and domineering and cocksure, and as wary as a rogue elephant: he was also as tender-hearted as a child. The question of physical courage does not arise in the estimation of such a man – he died with all his wounds in front, fighting off his murderers and their blazing pistols with his naked and untarnished sword. When you have said that his physical courage was the equal of his

moral courage, you have said all. 'To do great things a man must live as though he never had to die.'

That was Henry Wilson.

One must have lived through the decade immediately preceding the War and the War period itself to realise how powerfully this brilliant but bizarre personality dominated and helped to shape the events of his time. He was not a great soldier as a field commander may be reckoned a great soldier, but he was a great Staff officer, a great strategist and as far as military strategy impinged upon the domain of foreign affairs, a statesman of outstanding ability.

He was also, by temperament and with gusto, an extremely astute politician.

The greater part of his military career was devoted to preparing for the war which he regarded as inevitable. He was one of the driving forces behind the British Expeditionary Force and the plans for its trans-shipment and concentration in the event of hostilities. In 1917, when the Allied fortunes were at their blackest moment, he was the first to perceive that the way to victory lay only through the unity of command. Ever unrivalled in the art of communicating his own enthusiasm to others, it was mainly due to the way in which he was able to fire Mr. Lloyd George with his idea for an International Allied Staff that the Supreme War Council at Versailles came into being, with Henry Wilson as the British Military Member.

The War made him, brought him high honours – a Baronetcy, Field-Marshal's rank, the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff – because war gives opportunities to men of his stamp, with their foresight, their energy and, above all, their indomitable courage in adversity. Of good middle class stock and reared in the deeply patriotic but religiously narrow atmosphere of a North of Ireland Orange home, the interests of his native Ulster, lone and rugged rock of loyalty to the British Crown among the breakers of Southern Irish disaffection, were ever as close to his heart as his duty to his country – indeed, for him there was no distinction between the two conceptions. For him any compromise with Sinn Féin was

'shaking hands with murder'. When Mr. Lloyd George invited de Valera to London to discuss the bloody struggle going on in Ireland, Henry Wilson told the British Premier that if he met the Irish leader he would hand him over to the police. But his soldierly instinct revolted against the use of the Black and Tan Irregulars to terrorise the populace. 'The business of the Government is to govern,' he told Lloyd George. 'If these men must be murdered, the Government ought to murder them.'

He demanded martial law for the whole of Ireland, but Lloyd George was bent on settlement and after the Free State Treaty, which Wilson denounced as 'abject surrender', it was inevitable that they should part company. It was just as inevitable that he should gravitate to the House of Commons where, as Conservative member for the Ulster division of North Down, he immediately became the paladin of die-hard Ulsterism. His courage, his political acumen and, above all, his knowledge of the men he had to deal with gave the Republican Extremists, who were menacing Ulster and the Free State alike, a most formidable adversary – '*à corsaire corsaire et demi*'. He was too dangerous to live. The smoking pistols of a brace of fanatics exacted from him the penalty of his outspoken refusal of conciliation or compromise.

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Sir Thomas Montgomery Cuninghame, our military attaché in Vienna, at whose hospitable table and from whose astute and observant mind I absorbed much about European military problems when I was there, gave me a letter to Henry Wilson, then Director of Military Operations at the War Office and a brother officer of his in the Rifle Brigade. That was in 1913, when, on the conclusion of the First Balkan War, I was transferred permanently to London to take the place of Sir William Maxwell, lately resigned, to act as chief special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, and, between missions abroad, to be in charge of the newspaper's diplomatic news at home.

Henry Wilson asked me to breakfast at his house at 36 Eaton Place. It was the first of many such invitations. How many times did he not escort me to the door on my departure and



FIELD MARSHAL SIR HENRY WILSON

stand chatting a tall, lanky figure in blue serge, on those very steps which were to be stained with his blood! What fun those breakfasts were, and what an education for a young man who, after studying the political aspects of Anglo-German rivalry during the past decade, was thus introduced to its tactical end!

There were always other guests – General Staff Officers like ‘Charlie’ Deedes and others of ‘Henry Wilson’s young men’, ‘Charlie’ Hunter, M.P. for Bath, a great crony of Henry Wilson’s, Leo Maxse, the Cassandra of *The National Review*. And what terrific discussions we had, in which I, young and obscure as I was, was encouraged to take part – but I did know something about the German situation – Empire defence problems, the German naval menace, Ireland, the French Army, with our host laying down the law and pulling the breakfast things about to illustrate his theme and Lady Wilson, the only woman there, placid, self-effacing and adoring, behind the tea-cups.

Henry Wilson’s conversation was extraordinarily graphic. By far the most popular of all our generals with our Continental Allies in the War which, I admit is not saying much, it was his playful habit among his intimates to refer to the French invariably as ‘the Frogs’, to the Italians as ‘the Ice-creamers’, to the Germans as ‘Jerry’ or ‘the old Boche’. As it was also his custom to talk at the top of his voice in public, this vagary of his was sometimes rather embarrassing, especially when one met him on foreign soil during the War. He liked young men, and his influence over them when he was head of the Staff College and afterwards, through those famous lectures he used to deliver as Commander of the Fourth Corps at the front, was incalculable.

To the members of his staff he was the kindest and most affectionate Chief imaginable. He lived in a world of endearing nicknames, endearing and otherwise. Wilson had nicknames for everybody. Thus, he rarely referred to President Wilson (who was his especial bugbear) except as ‘My Cousin’, although, of course, they were in no way related. To dine with him at his mess at G.H.Q. when he was Sub-Chief of the General Staff – one would say that 7 Place Victor Hugo, at St.

Omar must still be saturated with his vibrant personality – was an invigorating if rather bewildering experience. In his place at the top of the table, bolting his food and talking incessantly, he would explain with the aid of the cruets, glasses, anything, the current operations. I remember once how, when I was dining with him the field telephone on the sideboard squeaked and, flinging down his napkin, he exclaimed, 'That'll be Caviar (his nickname for Colonel Cavendish, at that time British liaison officer at French G.H.Q.). Now we'll hear what the old Frogs have been up to!'

It was he who, foreseeing the War, initiated the secret conversations with the French and Belgian General Staffs which were withheld from the Cabinet as a whole and which were to get Sir Edward Grey into such trouble later on. In one of his lectures at the front he stated that he had made no fewer than seventeen trips by 'push-bike' to the battlefields of the war of 1870 and along the Franco-Belgian frontier to familiarise himself with the terrain. On his desk at his London house Sir John French used to keep a leather album containing photographs of Henry Wilson and some of his 'young men', inscribed 'The Travelling Party'. This volume commemorated the trips, in plain clothes and on foot or on bicycles, which Henry Wilson undertook with certain members of his Staff in the War Office along the Franco-Belgian frontier in summer holidays before the War, to acquaint his 'young men' with the presumable field of operations of the British Expeditionary Force in the event of war.

In those informal discussions and exchange of ideas between the British and French General Staffs before the War, he came to know Joffre and Foch well. Especially Foch. Foch loved the ugly Ulsterman like a brother: he used to call him 'Henri'. Sir John French told me a story to illustrate the affectionate relations existing between these two. When French visited Foch's headquarters at Doullens in 1914, Henry Wilson accompanied him. On spying Foch Wilson bounded forward with a loud 'Ha!' and, in full view of the assembled generals, civic dignitaries and the guard of honour, fell into the Frenchman's arms and the two embraced, kissing one another on either

cheek. Said French to me, 'The sight of Wilson, six foot three, hugging and kissing little Foch, who was five foot nothing, was one of the funniest things I ever saw.'

Of my meetings with Wilson during the War three, in particular, stand out in my memory. On October 9, 1914, at the height of the secret move of the British Expeditionary Force from the Aisne to Ypres, during which no British soldier was to show himself beyond a certain line drawn north of Beauvais, I found myself at Abbeville. I had no business to be there. No correspondents were allowed at the front at that time and the A.P.M.s were engaged in a perpetual chase after roving newspaper men who were continually rounded up and packed off home. But when I was in Paris with Northcliffe in the first days of October I met one Captain Olive of the 3rd Hussars who had come down from the front to buy stores for his mess. He had a return pass and suggested that, if I could raise a car, I might see something of the War – in the guise of a friendly motorist giving him a lift I might at least get as far as G.H.Q., then at La Fère-en-Tardenois. I put the idea up to Northcliffe who jumped at it. Wallace, the chief engineer of the Rolls-Royce Company in Paris, produced a Rolls sports roadster, and Olive, Northcliffe and I set off.

It was not long before we discovered that the move was on. G.H.Q. had shifted from La Fère-en-Tardenois and Olive suggested that we should drop him at Abbeville. Abbeville was crowded with British troops and swarming with red hats. As we were crossing the bridge, I caught sight of Henry Wilson's tall figure. I stopped the car and ran back. His astonishment at recognising me was immense. 'Hullo, young man,' he exclaimed, 'how the devil did you get here? You'd better not let the A.P.M. see you.' When I told him that Northcliffe was in the car with me, his astonishment increased. Shrinking away from me, with a look of comical dismay on his gnarled features, he crossed his fingers and held them up for me to see, then, swinging about, ran away across the bridge as fast as his long legs would carry him, as though the foul fiend were at his heels.

On another occasion I encountered him when he was

temporarily unemployed, his fortunes at a low ebb. It was in the summer of 1917, when I was back from the front. I was crossing St. James's Square when I came face to face with him in plain clothes. He took me by the arm and walked me round the square, talking in that animated fashion and with those exaggerated gestures which were so characteristic of him. He was neither downcast nor yet bitter – I never saw him bitter where his own interests were concerned. He said to me, 'What's the matter with everybody here? All these funny little politicians are scared to death – they don't seem to realise that we can't lose the War, that we're winning. It was a different thing in 1914 when we used to sit at the telephone with our teeth chattering and our knees knocking because it seemed impossible that the old Boche wouldn't reach the Channel ports. But now! I tell them they're mad, stark, staring mad! Mad! Mad! Mad!' And with a wave of his hand he left me to continue his stroll.

At the Paris Peace Conference, as chief British military delegate, he was at the pinnacle of his glory. I used to see him tearing about the place in the smart Rolls-Royce roadster he always drove himself, his military chauffeur at his side. One day – it was the last time I ever spoke to him – he was driving away from the Hotel Majestic as I came out and we had a little chat. 'I'm just off to call on my old friend, little Maunoury,' he said. 'A grand fellow, Maunoury. Remind me to tell you of how he crossed the Ourcq at the Battle of the Marne in button boots!' 'There's no time like the present, General,' I answered. He fluttered his hands. 'Can't stop now. Some other time. It's one of my best stories!'

I never saw him to speak to again. And so I never heard how it came about that the illustrious commander of the Sixth French Army which, assembled by Galliéni at Paris, struck the decisive blow at the Battle of the Marne, was wearing button boots at the historic passage of the Ourcq. But I found later in *Henry Wilson's Diaries*, as edited by Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, a reference to a certain 'little Frenchman in button boots and a dicky tie', who took part in one of the military discussions between the British and French General Staffs

in London before the War and became so excited that his bow tie 'shot out with a flop on to the map'. This was evidently the gallant Maunoury: it is tantalising to think that one does not know the rest of the story.

I have often searched my mind for a clue to Henry Wilson's strong and enigmatic personality. He was a partisan and, like all partisans, he was frequently wrong: his biographer admits that Lord Kitchener, with less opportunity to judge, took a far more accurate view of the War and its probable duration, than Henry Wilson. He was never a self-seeker and if he intrigued it was not to advance his own career, but the political principles he had so strongly at heart. Immersed in politics himself, he had no faith in politicians as a class – 'The Frocks', he used to call them – because, himself incorruptible, with a direct mind accustomed to reducing all problems to their simplest expression, the tortuous reasoning, the humbug and unashamed time-serving to be encountered in British politics revolted him.

He was a fanatical Ulsterman, and his partisan activities left a bitter mark on the Irish situation which still endures. At a time when European war was threatened, as none better knew than he, he did not shrink from the risk of disrupting the British Army (as instanced by the part he played behind the scenes in the Curragh affair of March 1914 – the 'Ulster pogrom', as he dubbed it) or of plunging Ireland into civil war rather than yield a foot from the stand he took in defence of what he held to be, not alone Ulster's just cause, but also the supreme interest of the Empire. His strength was the pusillanimity of a series of Governments in England which refused to face the Irish problem squarely.

Of 'The Frocks', the Liberals were those who evoked his most scathing contempt, and of the Liberal leaders, Asquith, whom he never designated except by a rather crude nickname, was his especial *bête noire*. The Prime Minister came to reciprocate these feelings, as Henry Wilson was to learn to his cost. The story goes that, not long after the outbreak of hostilities, when the outlook appeared extremely dark, Asquith overcame

his distrust of Wilson to the extent of sending for him to Downing Street and asking him, somewhat anxiously, what in his opinion would happen if we lost the War. Leaning forward in his chair and tapping the Premier significantly on the knee, Wilson is said to have replied genially, 'They'll *hang* you!'

If the anecdote is not true, at least the rejoinder is thoroughly characteristic of Wilson.

Asquith and the Liberals never forgave Wilson for forcing their hands in the Curragh affair and bringing about a crisis which involved the resignations of Sir John Seely, the Secretary of State for War, Sir John French, then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Sir J. Ewart, the Adjutant-General. The so-called 'Curragh mutiny' was an unprecedented and dramatic episode in the history of the British Army which at the time inflamed party passions to the highest point. It was the outcome of the prevalent belief in Ulster and in the Army that the Government was planning to use the troops to dragoon Ulster into accepting the provisions of the Home Rule Bill, i.e. among other things, incorporation with the rest of Ireland. Ulster was in full tide of preparation to resist annexation by force and the greatest excitement prevailed when it became known in March 1914 that the officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, the great military camp outside Dublin, had been given the choice of 'undertaking active operations against Ulster' or dismissal from the Army with loss of pension.

Actually, from first to last, the whole thing was a scandalous bungle. Whether, as was alleged, Sir Arthur Paget, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, got his orders verbally because the War Office, in view of the delicacy of the situation, did not want to commit itself to writing, is neither here nor there – the fact is that he seems to have misunderstood or exceeded the War Office directions: in his memoirs Sir John Seely alleges that the 3rd Cavalry Brigade was to be sent to the South of Ireland, in view of the growing activities of the Sinn Feiners, and not to Ulster.

But the damage was done. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade was composed of the 16th Lancers, 4th Hussars and 5th Lancers,

under command of General Hubert Gough (afterwards made the scapegoat of the *débâcle* of the Fifth Army in France in 1918) and fifty-six out of sixty officers, including Gough himself, accepted resignation as the alternative. Colonel Hogg, commanding the 4th Hussars, stood out, but the officers of the Scarlet – the 16th – Lancers resigned in a body, and sundry artillery and engineer officers stationed at the Curragh declared their solidarity with their comrades in the cavalry.

The authorities made every effort to hush up the affair, and under King's regulations the officers involved had their lips as effectively sealed as Lord Baldwin's on a celebrated occasion. But politics, like love, will find a way. A mysterious telegram from an unknown lady in a remote Essex village (an Ulster sympathiser) put the facts in the hands of the *Daily Mail* and I was rushed to Ireland from Glasgow where I was investigating a labour dispute and discovering that I was much more at my ease with foreign diplomatists than with trade union leaders from 'doon the wa'. Almost from the start, therefore, I was in the thick of the Curragh imbroglio.

I sometimes have occasion to remind Americans that Great Britain, like the United States, is a Protestant country at heart. Start parading the political power of the Catholic Church and you start trouble: the No Popery banners come out in a jiffy. The Ulster question was more religious than political, and to ask of Church of England officers to give in advance an undertaking to do violence to their religious as well as their patriotic sentiments was to put them in a cruel dilemma, especially those without private means. So passions, religious and political, flared in the Curragh controversy.

Arrived in Dublin I found Headquarters in Ireland and the Curragh messes equally mute. But a hint discreetly dropped in my ear sent me to the Soldiers' Home at the Curragh, where a certain source, not a service one, proved to be accurately and promptly posted of every move of the crisis, not only in Ireland but also at Westminster, with the result that the *Daily Mail* was more quickly and reliably informed of the developments of the crisis than the House of Commons itself. From this and other sources I made at the time some notes about the little-

known inside history of the crisis, elaborating them from conversations I had in later years with Sir John French and others.

There was a highly dramatic scene at the Curragh Fire Station where, after the initial interview with Gough in Dublin, Sir Arthur Paget met the Brigadier and about fifty officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade. The Commander-in-Chief told the officers that active operations against Ulster were to start at once. Officers domiciled in Ulster would be allowed to 'disappear' until the operations were over when they would be restored to their seniority: the remainder would either do their duty or resign and be dismissed the Army without pension.

Gough said to the officers, 'Gentlemen, I am to give you ten minutes in which to make up your minds. Personally I can tell you it took me ten seconds.' When Sir Arthur Paget, in support of some statement he made, declared to Colonel Parker, commanding the 5th Lancers, 'You can take my word,' Parker replied coldly, 'I could once, sir, but I can do so no longer.' McEwan, the Colonel of the 16th, said sadly, 'I know I shall not come back, but I joined the Service to fight the King's enemies, not the King's friends.' At another meeting Sir Charles Fergusson who commanded the infantry at the Curragh—he was subsequently to earn the respect of the German people by his broadmindedness and humanity as first Governor of the British Zone of Occupation on the Rhine after the Armistice—by an impassioned appeal restrained the officers of the Line from throwing in their lot with the cavalry.

Gough and the two Colonels who had resigned with him, McEwan of the Lancers and Parker of the 5th, were given leave to go to London to interview the War Office. Meanwhile, on Seely's inquiry as to what the Army would agree to, Henry Wilson had drafted a written undertaking by the Government that troops would not be employed for the coercion of Ulster and that Gough and the officers should be reinstated. The Curragh deputation arrived to find the House of Commons and the War Office seething. Public opinion was in an uproar, the Army Council divided: officers of the Household Cavalry declared their intention of likewise sending in their papers if Gough and his officers were sacrificed.

At the deputation's first interview with the C.I.G.S., Sir John French severely criticised the action of Gough and the others and only the personal intervention of Lord Roberts restored a more peaceful atmosphere. I find in my notes mention of a stormy scene when, in the presence of Gough and his two companions, Seely charged Lord Roberts with being the instigator of the whole affair, saying, 'It is all your fault, you are entirely to blame,' likewise a memo to the effect that, according to Brinsley FitzGerald, French's private secretary and friend of long standing, Seely repeated this accusation to the King who thereupon sent for the aged Field-Marshal. Roberts indignantly denied the charge and was, indeed, so upset that he asked His Majesty to take back the Field-Marshal's bâton he had received from the hands of Queen Victoria.

Throughout all the lengthy discussions that took place in London, Gough was continually advised by his brother, General John Gough (afterwards killed in the War) and Henry Wilson. During the interminable interviews between Gough and the military and civilian heads of the Army in French's room at the War Office, Henry Wilson hovered in the ante-room, whispering to Gough whenever the latter appeared, 'Get it in writing! Put it in the Bank of England!' When Gough at length obtained a written guarantee to the effect that the Government would only ask the troops to aid the civil power in Ulster, Henry Wilson promptly objected that, once the Home Rule Bill became law, the coercion of Ulster would automatically fall under the heading of 'aiding the civil power'. Finally they received a draft, initialled by Seely, French and Ewart (the Adjutant-General) which appeared satisfactory. But Henry Wilson, always distrustful of 'The Frocks', detected an ominous ambiguity in the last paragraph, which spoke of the Government not using the troops to suppress 'political opposition'.

Gough, prompted by Henry Wilson, said to French, 'We are plain soldiers, and we don't understand all these legal terms—we are plain men and we want things put plainly.' And he produced a note drawn up by him and Henry Wilson

which read, 'Do we understand by the above that we are not to be asked to bear arms against Ulster to enforce the present Home Rule Bill, and can we return and tell our officers so?' After some argument French wrote at the foot of the paper, 'I so read it,' and signed his name. Asquith, hard pressed in the House of Commons and incensed by the charge that the Government was 'bargaining with mutiny', repudiated this part of the document implying that Seely alone was responsible for it, with the result that Seely resigned and French and Ewart soon after, Henry Wilson continually stiffening French to stand firm and resist the strong pressure brought upon him to withdraw his resignation.

The reverberations of this disastrously mishandled affair persisted far into the Great War. Memories of it clouded the relations between the Army and the politicians, which is to say, the relations between British G.H.Q. in France and the Home Government. Long after the bitterness the controversy evoked at the time had faded from the public consciousness, the rôle played by the leading protagonists rose up against them, in military as well as in political circles.

Henry Wilson was the chief victim. Notwithstanding his magnificent bearing on the Retreat, acclaimed by all, the first list of awards appeared without his name and when, on Sir Archibald Murray's retirement from the post of Chief of Staff in France in December 1914, French put forward Wilson's name as Murray's successor, Asquith, backed by Kitchener, vetoed the appointment on the grounds that Wilson was 'the principal cause of all the Ulster trouble and therefore dangerous', as French subsequently confided to Wilson.¹ Wilson's name was likewise struck from the list of officers recommended for the K.C.B. (February 1915). As to Hubert Gough, without any inside knowledge of the facts, I have always surmised that his leadership of the 'Curragh mutiny' seriously depressed the scales against him in the minds of some of those called upon to review his handling of the Fifth Army in the spring of 1918.

¹ *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson's Life and Diaries*, by Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, K.C.B. (Cassell, 1927), Vol. I, p. 194.

Since re-reading the *Wilson Diaries*, I have also come to the conclusion that the coolness, not to say the antagonism, existing between Kitchener and French, which so greatly influenced the conduct of the War on the British side in the earlier stages of the campaign in France and Belgium, also had its roots in the Curragh controversy. If we are to believe the evidence of the *Wilson Diaries*, Kitchener was not well disposed towards Wilson, and the feeling was reciprocated, for, under the date 1911, we find Wilson rather maliciously recording a piece of gossip he had picked up from Sir Arthur Nicolson (afterwards Lord Carnock) at the Foreign Office: 'Nicolson told me Kitchener said that the (British) Army was not ready, badly trained and rotten, that England would be shouting for him to take command, and more in this manner.'¹ In the same year, as Commandant of the Staff College at Camberley, Wilson mentions that Kitchener on a visit to the College 'attacked' him about 'founding a new school of thought'.²

As the history of the Curragh episode shows, Henry Wilson's influence over French was strong. Moreover, Wilson's personal resentment of Kitchener's attitude towards him gave the tone of British G.H.Q. in France towards the Secretary of State for War. As Wilson's biographer admits, Wilson lost no opportunity for ridiculing Kitchener and his New Armies scheme, and in view of the intimate friendship existing between French and Wilson, it is not surprising that Kitchener should have regarded them as banded in enmity against him. Incidentally, we find Wilson, in November 1914, conveying to French a confidential statement made to him by Foch to the effect that at a meeting at Dunkirk, Kitchener had proposed to President Poincaré and General Joffre replacing French by Sir Ian Hamilton, a proposal from which Joffre promptly demurred out of loyalty to the British Commander-in-Chief.³ Subsequently French expressed his warm thanks to Foch for his comradely spirit in passing the information on. In carrying the tale to his Chief, Henry Wilson unquestionably acted

¹ Ibid. Vol. I, p. 103.

² Ibid. Vol. I, p. 84.

³ Ibid. Vol. I, p. 186.

as he thought right; it is not to be supposed, however, that the disclosure enhanced the warmth of French's feelings towards Kitchener.

But, from the days of Marlborough on – in the Peninsular War, the Waterloo campaign, the Crimea – it has been the same story. Our commanders have always had two foes to contend with – the official enemy, and their personal opponents and rivals at home or in the forces in the field. These bitter jealousies between generals are, of course, common to all armies, but I think they grew ranker and flourished more strongly in our small professional army of the pre-War period, in which every officer above a certain rank knew all about the career of his contemporaries from their Sandhurst or Woolwich days together onward. The World War was a struggle of the nations. Hundreds of thousands of Britons at home and from every part of the Empire abandoned their civilian occupations to volunteer. Yet in many cases their lives were left at the mercy of generals, in whose appointment not merit, but the fact that they belonged to some Army clique, or the desire of the man in authority to repay some old obligation, or even to keep an old rival out, played the decisive rôle. Listening to the conversation at headquarter messes at the front and in the many talks I had with our leading generals, when I was a war correspondent, I was often astonished to find how incidents far more trivial than the Curragh affair, as, for instance, old squabbles on manœuvres, or even the spite of discarded mistresses, could influence such things. It left me with the feeling that, in too many cases, the lives of our young men were literally being used for the paying off of old scores.

Of course, there was no malice aforethought about it. It was the system. When a high command had to be filled, it was not invariably a question – with the military heads, at any rate – of 'Who's the best man?', but as often as not 'What about old X?', simply because in the freemasonry of the old British Army, certain people 'belonged' and were almost automatically in line for any plums that were going, when their particular set was in power. To some extent a similar system

prevailed in the old Diplomatic Service, as I pointed out in a previous chapter, with the important difference, however, that the price of a bad ambassador is not paid in the flesh and blood of his fellow citizens.

Long after Lord Ypres, the former Sir John French, had retired, I said to him one day at his London house, 'You know, Field-Marshal, when you write to me, you always address me as "D.S.O."'. I think I should tell you I didn't get the D.S.O.' 'Didn't you, though?' replied the Field-Marshal with perfect simplicity. 'I wish I'd known that when I was commanding in France.' In other words, it was enough for him that I was his friend for him to have put in my way any honour that he could legitimately bestow, 'and no damned merit about it,' as Disraeli said of the Garter. If Clemenceau was right when he observed that the military always fight the last war over again, I do not anticipate that in the next war, it will be found that matters in this respect have changed much unless it be that, under conscription for all classes of the population, the civilian control of forces in the field will extend also to the nominations in the upper hierarchy.

This was the setting in which, for better or for worse, Henry Wilson's tempestuous life was spent. Without some realisation of these things, it is not possible to take a fair view of the man and his career. But he played the game. If he could hate as well as love, at least he never betrayed a friend. I like the mental picture I retain of him, with that gargoyle-like face of his, lean of limb and long of leg in khaki and riding boots, standing up in front of the War Memorial among the rushing throngs of Liverpool Street Station and reciting the lines that were his last public utterance in life:

'The wind sublime eternal soars
And, scorning human haunts and earthly shores,
To these whom godlike deeds forbid to die
Unbars the gates of immortality.'

This verse is inscribed on his tomb in the Crypt of St. Paul's.

CHAPTER XVI

REVELRY. LONDON 1913-4

GIFTED and attractive Wilfred Ewart, who in his moving novel *Way of Revelation* left a picture of London society dancing to its doom in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the War, was a friend of mine. He was in the Scots Guards and we were in the War together. His War novel *Way of Revelation* which he published after the War ran in its original form to something like 300,000 words – in it he had written all he had to say, Ewart confided to me, '*vidé le sac entier*', as a Frenchman would put it. But this was before *Anthony Adverse* and *Gone with the Wind*, and to reduce the book to practical form for publication purposes, Michael Sadleir, of Constable's, was obliged to take out about 120,000 words, as the author, with a rather tragic air, informed me.

The novel was an instant success and in the light of young Ewart's tragic death I have often wondered what became of the excisions and whether they contained anything worth preserving. Stephen Graham, who made a hit with an unusual book *With the Russian Pilgrims at Jerusalem*, published before the War, was a friend of Ewart's. I believe they first met at the front when Stephen Graham was serving as a private in the Scots Guards. After the War he and Ewart went on a trip to Mexico together. Standing on the balcony of his hotel at Mexico City, watching the native population usher in the New Year with the usual fusillade of bullets and fire-crackers, Ewart was killed by a stray shot discharged at random into the air, a real loss to English letters.

By comparison with the period of post-War depression in which novels like *Way of Revelation* and others of its type

appeared, London of the pre-War era, certainly seemed gay. London has always drawn on the foreigner for its artistic nourishment and the trend in entertainment in that last phase was markedly cosmopolitan with, ironically enough, a strong German flavour, what with Charles B. Cochran's lavish production of *The Miracle* at Olympia, Max Reinhardt's own *Sumurun* at the Coliseum, and the company from the Berlin Komische Oper in *Hoffman's Erzählungen* down the Strand at the Adelphi. The quality of the London season was higher in those days, but, from the standpoint of sheer volume, the season to-day is ten times more festive and crowded than anything the pre-War period had to show.

While unquestionably more exclusive than it is at present, society was already in the full process of flux. Under Edward VII the gold of the South African millionaires had started to sap its defences and in the new reign money continued to speak with an ever more authoritative voice. Already values were considerably jumbled. I remember a photograph in one of the society weeklies of the guests at a week-end party at a famous country-house, showing Father Bernard Vaughan, the famous Jesuit preacher who from the pulpit at Farm Street used to castigate the 'sins of society' before the most fashionable congregations of women, standing side by side with Miss Ethel Levey ('good old Ethel'), the sparkling American soubrette of the London Hippodrome revues.

From the early spring of 1913, right up to the eve of the Archduke's assassination in June 1914, I was flitting in and out of the London scene like a martin in a barn between a succession of special missions abroad – to Germany and Russia, to the Balkans (the Second Balkan War), to Rome and the Italian lakes, to the Riviera (French and Italian), to Vienna and Budapest, to Bucharest, to Paris – and various journeys across the Irish Sea to Dublin and Ulster. Living was cheap – my rooms in Bolton Street, Piccadilly (a few doors from the most lavishly run and notorious gambling house in London) cost me three guineas a week and Savile Row's top price for a lounge suit was ten guineas – the income-tax low. We were dancing on a volcano, certainly, but it is not within my

recollection that disaster was written in the stars or that at Murray's (where Jack May was king) or Ciro's or, lower down the night-club scale, at the old Cosmo, or MacFarland's, we called for madder music and for stronger wine.

Actually, by the summer of 1914, thanks to the exchange of highly successful official visits between the Kaiser and George V – the London crowd, ever a-tiptoe for a show, always gave 'Kaiser Bill' a big hand – and the pacifying influence of the well-meant if unsuccessful efforts of Messrs. Haldane and Winston Churchill for a naval holiday, Anglo-German relations were less strained than they had been at any time during my German years. Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador, was a great gentleman and he and the Princess were a great deal more popular with all ranks of society than any of his immediate predecessors had been. He was making a real success of his mission: if he had but known it, his most formidable opponent was within the doors of his own chancery, a not uncommon situation in the annals of the German diplomatic service, as I have mentioned in a previous chapter.

Not that the foreign situation was altogether satisfactory.

At the Conference in London in the spring of 1913 peace was patched up between the Balkan belligerents; but there was ample warning that trouble still smouldered in the Near East. The Conference, which met at St. James's Palace, was my first assignment on my return to London – I have grateful memories of a parting gift at its close of several thousand delicious Serbian Régie cigarettes, the surplus of an enormous stock brought to London by the delegates, presented to me by my friend, Antoniévitsh, one of the secretaries. I might mention here that, up to the outbreak of the World War, we were in the habit of speaking of 'Servia' and the 'Servians'. When Servia became our ally, it became 'Serbia' and the 'Serbians' on the urgent representations of the Belgrade Government which pointed out that the old nomenclature suggested a derivation from 'servus' a slave. At least, such was the explanation given to me when, on Northcliffe's instructions, *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the rest of his newspapers initiated the change. As the St. James's Palace Conference drooled on,

none of us foresaw how soon the blood pact between the Balkan Powers, sealed on the battlefields of Bulgaria, was to be broken. As I sat and chatted with Dr. Daneff, the 'Bulgarian Bismarck' – who ever speaks of him now? – at his suite at the Carlton I little thought that within a few months I should be standing in a Serbian trench under the fire of the Bulgar guns.

Life was very full in those eighteen months. When I was in London I shuttled to and fro between Carmelite House and the Foreign Office, the Embassies and Legations, the Houses of Parliament. There were luncheons at 22 St. James's Place, where Northcliffe ruled in Samuel Rogers's place, the friend of Dr. Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith and Joshua Reynolds and giver of the famous breakfasts, to meet the lion of the hour or some 'visiting fireman' from across the Atlantic like Cyrus Curtis, proprietor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Isaac Marcossou, America's 'ace' interviewer, whose *Adventures in Interviewing* every cub reporter should read, or Herbert Swope, the dashing special correspondent and later editor of the old *New York World*.

There were week-ends with the Chief at Elmwood, outside Broadstairs, which he loved so well because it was the first country-house he ever owned and where the sweet-pea were the largest and most fragrant and most varied in hue of any I have ever seen, with golf on the adjacent links beside the Channel over against the stairs leading down to the beach from Kingsgate Castle, which John Buchan immortalised in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Or at times on my return from one of my foreign missions Northcliffe would whisk me off in his Rolls at seventy miles an hour, driven by the famous Pine who was once an engine-driver on the C.P.R., to Sutton Place, his stately Elizabethan mansion outside Guildford – the Duke of Sutherland has it now – where he never really seemed at his ease (such quiet moments with him there were much preferable to the enormous staff garden parties he gave from time to time, which were a 'parade' for us all).

There were 'stag' dinners at the Garrick Club, at which my editor, Tom Marlowe, was host and where the food and wine

were surpassed in quality only by the table talk, conducted, as it would so often be, by such past masters of the lost art of conversation as Edward Marshall Hall, Charles Brookfield or old Sir Squire Bancroft. For a very old gentleman, Bancroft's memory was remarkable. We were speaking of Ellaline Terriss one day and I said, 'Sir Ernest Shackleton (the Polar explorer) was telling me the other night that he once had to spend several dreary weeks at Stanley, the capital of the Falkland Islands, and the only thing he could discover to have ever happened there was that Ellaline Terriss was born at the local inn.'

'Quite right,' retorted Bancroft promptly. 'I remember, as though it were only yesterday, Will Terriss, Ellaline's father, who was then in my company, coming to me and saying, "Guv'nor, I've made up my mind that I'm doing no good at this stage business. I'm going to take 'the missus and join a friend of mine in a sheep farm in the Falkland Islands.'" Well, poor Will's venture didn't prosper and at the end of a couple of years he was back on the stage. But in the interval his daughter Ellaline was born—as Shackleton told you, in the Falkland Islands.'

Because Ernest Shackleton was one of those rare people who on dying leave behind in the hearts of their friends a void that the passage of time does nothing to fill, I feel I must speak of him here. He was such a gallant, gifted, human creature, Irish, magnetic, a king among men. The *Daily Mail*, of which I was Foreign Editor at the time (1921), secured the news rights in his last Antarctic expedition in the *Quest* and I saw a lot of him when he was fitting out that ill-found and unlucky little ship. More than this, I caught a glimpse as in a mirror of the impression which this born leader had made on the hearts of his old shipmates, who, every time he announced a fresh voyage, would come from the ends of the earth to sail with him. As is known, he never returned from the *Quest* venture. A heart attack laid him low on board the *Quest* in the harbour of South Georgia and he died in Frank Wild's arms—Frank Wild, his beloved second-in-command and companion on all his expeditions, the only man in the world entitled to wear seven Polar medals with the white ribbon.

When the *Quest* finally sailed from Southampton, I went with her and stayed aboard until the pilot left her in the Solent. I was the last person to say good-bye to Shackleton. He was exceedingly superstitious. In particular, he had a dread of white heather—he said it brought him bad luck. The pilot had gone over the side, and ‘The Boss’, as his men called him, and I were about to shake hands, when someone came up with a parcel which had arrived for Shackleton by post. Mechanically, Shackleton opened it, then with a sudden exclamation pitched box and its contents into the sea. It was white heather sent to him from Scotland by an admirer.

A mass of tireless energy, with the athletic frame of a deep-sea diver, he overtaxed his strength in the frightful vicissitudes of his 1914-7 expedition to the Weddell Sea when the *Endurance* was crushed in the ice and he and twenty-seven companions were adrift on a floe for 457 days and nights. From Elephant Island, where they reached terra firma at last, Shackleton took five picked men and set out in a twenty-two-foot open boat, in the depth of the Antarctic winter, on the journey of 750 miles to South Georgia to summon help. Only the faith and courage of their leader brought this little band of Vikings through: he chaffed them, cheered them, cursed them, recited verses to them, which he did very beautifully—Kipling, Browning, Masfield—to keep their spirits up among the perpetual blizzards, the mountainous seas; but only he was in full possession of his senses when at long last they made their destination.

He had a lovely appreciation of verse and an astonishing memory with regard to it—he could quote you poetry by the hour. Shackleton’s memory was prodigious. He did not know a word of the German language but when, on his return from one of his expeditions, he was booked for a lecture tour in Germany, he memorised his lecture phonetically in German. This sounded to me like a yarn, when he told me about it, one night we were dining together, but to prove he was speaking the truth, he started off then and there at the table, ‘*Eure Exzellenzen, meine Damen und Herren,*’ and rattled through the opening sentences of a lecture he had delivered ten years or

so before, in a tongue completely foreign to him, with what was, in the circumstances, a very fair accent.

He was generous to a fault. Money meant nothing to him: when he had it, and often when he didn't have it, he gave it away with both hands. The cab-shelter at Hyde Park Corner was one of his haunts and he had often lent a helping hand to the drivers he met there. That afternoon on board the *Quest* when we said good-bye he was touched almost to tears to receive a case of pipes, a spontaneous and unexpected gift from his friends, the Hyde Park Corner cabmen, with their good wishes for a safe return. Money troubles, not all of his making, dogged him all through his life. But Shackleton was game: he always came up smiling.

When he died the body was brought from South Georgia to Monte Video with a view to being sent home to England. Here, I flatter myself, I rendered my dead friend a small service in return for some of the friendship he had shown me, for which, if we ever meet again, I believe he will thank me. I ascertained that there was no question of burial at St. Paul's: this meant that the interment would be at Eastbourne, where he and his wife had a house.

Lady Shackleton is dead now so there is no harm in saying that Shackleton hated Eastbourne. Lady Shackleton, a placid, kindly woman who was of the home-making type and immensely proud of her distinguished husband, had gone to a great deal of trouble to create for him and their children a home at Eastbourne, where all the souvenirs of his various expeditions were gathered together and to which he could always come back after his voyages into the Polar ice. But Eastbourne lionised Shackleton and he loathed it: civilisation irked him, anyway, because 'the stark and solemn solitudes that sentinel the Pole' (a favourite quotation of his) were always calling to him, and he particularly resented the rôle thrust upon him of being paraded as Eastbourne's most distinguished citizen, of figuring as one of the leaders of the colony of retired colonels and Indian civil servants forming the society of this rather exclusive seaside resort – he used to rail about it to me. It seemed to me that Shackleton would never rest in peace in an

Eastbourne cemetery: you could not confine a soaring spirit like his within the confines of a family burial plot. And so I went into action.

South Georgia, the last stop, as you might say, before the South Pole, is a British possession, though it is mainly frequented by Norwegian whalers. Shackleton loved these hardy, simple Norsemen: he often told me about them – he said they were the salt of the earth. South Georgia is the gate of the Antarctic, where the name of Ernest Shackleton is inscribed on the roll of fame alongside the names of Scott and Amundsen: he had died at South Georgia which, moreover, was for ever associated with his epic boat journey – it seemed to me that his remains should find their final resting-place at South Georgia.

I took counsel with John Quiller Rowett, who was financing the *Quest* expedition and he fully approved my idea. But I wondered about the explorer's widow. I knew Lady Shackleton wanted her husband to be buried at Eastbourne: how could I make her understand? Before calling on her I sat down and drafted a letter to *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* as from her, embodying my reasons why the body should not be brought home but should be taken back from Monte Video and buried at South Georgia. She must never know, I decided, that the idea was mine – I would have to make her think it was hers. Putting the draft of the letter in my pocket, I went round to the house.

I came away with the letter signed and it appeared in the newspapers next day.

So Ernest Shackleton was taken back to South Georgia and reposes there under a tall cairn on the top of a hill, his face turned south, as it always was in life.

There were parties with Beerbohm Tree – on the stage after a first night at His Majesty's or in the Dome – and suppers at the old Supper Club – who remembers it now, fashionable as it was? – at the Grafton Galleries. Often on Sunday evenings, our respective editorials written and passed, H. W. Wilson, the veteran leader-writer of the *Daily Mail*, and I would dine at the Cheshire Cheese together. One night I met there by

chance George Saunders, for so many years *Times* correspondent, first at Berlin and afterwards at Paris. He told me that he had not set foot inside the Cheshire Cheese since the year 1876. At that time there was an aged waiter named Charlie who had been on the staff for forty years, thus taking us back to 1836, a fairly long link with the past even for the old tavern.

Sometimes, of a Sunday morning, I used to play hockey on Little Wormwood Scrubs in matches arranged among themselves, their relations and friends, by the large and jolly family of Wilfred and Alice Meynell. They had a big house in the Bayswater Road and there at tea on Sunday afternoons I would meet a gentle, very thin old man, who spoke little but was clearly a part of the household. It was Francis Thompson, the poet, author of *The Hound of Heaven*, whom Wilfred Meynell had found half starved, selling matches in the streets of London, and befriended. The story was that Meynell's attention was first attracted to the poor, ragged match-seller by the fact that he was reading Virgil's *Aeneid* in the original, while he vended his matches at the kerb. Alice Meynell was a sweet, motherly person who always made me welcome at her house: I did not realise what an admirable poetess she was until much later.

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A feature of London society in those pre-War days were the week-end parties given by that cultured and charming woman, Mrs. Allhusen, who was Lady Jeune's daughter, at her house at Stoke Poges. Literature and the stage were always well represented at these delightful gatherings. Mrs. Allhusen was a great admirer of Alice Crawford's talents as an actress and once or twice my future wife had me included in her invitation. E. F. Benson, Hugh Walpole, and the inimitable Saki (Hector Munro), whom I had known when he was doing newspaper work in Russia, were among the writers I met at Stoke Poges, but of them only E. F. Benson had an established name at that time. Despite the fact that his health was never robust, Saki was one of the first to volunteer for the Army when war was declared. I have always thought that few Bri-

tons made a greater sacrifice for their country than this shy and sensitive creature, with his delicate rapier wit and instinctive repulsion from the ugly in life, who, heedless of the rough life and the lack of privacy of the barrack-room, joined up as a private soldier, and as a private soldier was killed in action.

Arising out of our meetings at Mrs. Allhusen's, I played a certain rôle in a crucial decision which, as the future Sir Hugh Walpole told me years afterwards, had much to do with the shaping of his career. As said, I used to meet Walpole at the Allhusens: he and Saki had been in Russia together and they would sit up to all hours in the billiard-room yarning about Russia and I with them, after the others had gone to bed. Well, not long after the outbreak of war, when I was working sixteen hours a day organising the *Daily Mail* war service, dispatching couriers, appointing correspondents, I ran into Walpole again somewhere and he asked me whether I could not find him a newspaper job. As he had lived in Russia and spoke some Russian he had applied to join the Red Cross in Russia; but there were difficulties in the way and he was not hopeful.

As it happened, I was looking for a man to represent the *Daily Mail* in Rome: terms, £1,000 a year plus expenses. I offered Walpole the post, stipulating only that he must give his answer at once, as the matter was urgent. He begged for twenty-four hours in which to decide, but next morning telephoned to inform me that the Russian Red Cross appointment had materialised and that he was leaving for Russia at once. Thus, the *Daily Mail* lost the services of a gifted contributor, but English letters became the richer for *The Dark Forest*. I have often speculated as to how Hugh Walpole's literary career would have developed if, in 1914, he had become a newspaper correspondent in Italy instead of a stretcher-bearer in Russia.

In between these social activities I kept on with my real tennis – 'court tennis', as the Americans call it. I joined the club at Hampton Court Palace and played on what is by far the oldest and most illustrious *jeu de paume* in the world – the

Tuileries court in the Palace of Versailles, scene of the historic 'Tennis Court Oath' in the French Revolution, not excepted – situated in the heart of Cardinal Wolsey's noble pile. At Hampton Court the chase lines are surmounted by royal crowns, with full right, for many English kings, from Henry VIII to Edward VII (in his younger days as Prince of Wales) have disported themselves here: the legend goes that Henry VIII was at tennis at Hampton Court when he heard the tidings that Anne Boleyn had been safely dispatched by the headsman's axe at the Tower.

The court in its present state was rebuilt in the reign of Charles II who, with his brother, the Duke of York, afterwards James II, often played here: it has a feature, unique among extant tennis courts, in the shape of a small loge set high up in the back wall on the hazard side where the Court ladies could watch the gentlemen at play. I might mention that, for many years past, wherever I have found myself in the neighbourhood of a tennis court still in use, I have made a practice of getting a game. To date I have played in Vienna, Paris, Hampton Court, Ditton Place (Mr. A. B. Horne's), Brighton (Prince's), Hayling Island (Mr. J. F. Marshall's), New York (Racquet and Tennis Club), Long Island (Mr. Clarence Mackay's) and Dublin (Lord Iveagh's). Lord Iveagh's court, constructed some time in the late eighties of blocks of black Connemara marble at the cost of many thousands of pounds, is in the enormous Iveagh mansion on Stephen's Green in Dublin and when I went in search of it, one day in 1930, I found the great house untenanted save for an elderly caretaker. This proved to be however, the court's original marker, Jewell, the same who marked the celebrated professional match between Charles Saunders the British champion, and Pettitt, the American, with which the court was formally inaugurated for play in the year 1890, Pettitt winning by the narrow margin of 7 sets to 5. Jewell gave me my game.

But, taking it all round, I was much more frequently abroad than at home during those last eighteen months of peace. When the editor sent for me, it was as often as not to

place a canvas bag of gold sovereigns in my hand with the order to catch the first available train for Lisbon, Bucharest, Rome, anywhere. I was rarely given more than a few hours' notice of a mission which might be a matter of weeks as easily as days. I used to keep a bag packed at my rooms, ready for an office-boy to pick up and meet me with it at Charing Cross, the chief continental terminus in those days. I went to Vienna from Paris with a week-end bag and stayed half a year: I set out for Belgrade in a straw hat and a blue suit and when the Second Balkan War unexpectedly broke out, had to purchase riding kit, a tent, horses, stores, the whole war correspondent's equipment, on the spot.

Zigzagging across Europe in the great trans-continental trains – the Orient Express, the Nord Express, the Sud Express – I met all kinds of odd people, as, for example, a professional racehorse gelder, an Irish veterinary surgeon, on a tour of the Hungarian studs; a North of England foreman engineer *en route* to supervise the fitting of machinery on an island in the Sea of Marmora, speaking no language except his own to me all but unintelligible brand of Yorkshire; and various King's Messengers, including the late Guy Ewan, most diverting of companions, who seemed to know everybody in European society, and with whom I had many a chat in his reserved carriage littered with Foreign Office bags.

It was a strenuous existence with plenty of variety and often a spice of adventure. It left me with very little private life of my own, but I was still young, single and curious, as the saying goes, and I enjoyed it, without ever realising that I was storing up invaluable material against the day when, through the agency of a six-inch shell, I was to quit an active newspaper career and launch myself into fiction.

CHAPTER XVII

‘QUEM DEUS VULT PERDERE –’ ST. PETERSBURG
1913

THERE were Pan-Russians in those days – only they called them Slavophiles – as well as Pan-Germans. The Russian Slavophiles demanded that Russia should act as protector and leader of the Balkan States, especially against the Habsburg Monarchy’s *Drang nach Osten*. In the spring of 1913, at the conclusion of the First Balkan War which drove the Turk out of Europe and left the Balkan Powers to divide the spoils, the Russian Slavophiles were in a ferment. The reason was the formation under Austro-Hungarian auspices of an autonomous State of Albania, with an outlet to the sea in the shape of the Port of Scutari, lopped off the still independent Kingdom of Montenegro, as a check to Pan-Serbian dreams of a Greater Serbia. There were riots in St. Petersburg and the growing fear that, as the motive force behind the manifestations was for a change not revolutionary but nationalist, the Guards regiments, upon which the authorities always relied to suppress disorders, might fraternise with the demonstrators. So I was whisked off to Russia to find out what it was all about.

There is among my papers (April 1913) a note recording my first impressions on entering Russia. As a rather youthful effort in the best *Daily Mail* descriptive style, I am not proud of it, but it was written while I was still under the influence of an entirely unfamiliar and strongly felt atmosphere. I therefore reproduce it *tel quel*.

‘I doubt if there is a country in the world that makes a deeper first impression on the newcomer than Russia.

'The moment I entered the Customs hall at Wirballen, the German-Russian frontier station and, handing my passport' to a waiting gendarme, was forthwith registered as a stranger visiting Russia, I felt I was crossing the threshold of a new civilisation.

'Here at the gates of Russia everything was unfamiliar; the sacred ikon, with its candle burning before it, the officials with their round astrakhan caps, the women luggage examiners with their neat white head-cloths, the bearded porters with their vast aprons, the unwonted speech, the bewildering Russian print. I felt I was penetrating among a vast clan living its own life and thinking its own thoughts, next door to but altogether alien from the great European family which lives and thinks more or less alike from London to Vienna, from Christiania to Madrid.

'The utter unfamiliarity of Russia! It was thawing the morning I reached St. Petersburg and the streets were sloughs of mud and melting ice. The day was dark, a dismal sleet was falling, and all was grey and sad. But in the mournful half-light of noon-day I think the city was seen at its best, for the colour scheme of all Russian cities is one of contrasts, to set off the monotony of the endless winter white. The great palaces and public buildings, stucco-fronted, in tones of fierce brick-red or lurid yellow, loomed in barbaric splendour against the colourless background of a winter sky, while above the house tops the gilded cupolas and spires of the churches gleamed dully through the greyish mist. The vastness, the magnificence, the garishness of it all, seemed to speak of Russia's centuries of dominion, pomp and blood, and the sadness of the atmosphere to symbolise the inherent melancholy of the Slav soul.

'Impressions crowd thickly on the stranger newly arrived in St. Petersburg. The door porter of the Hotel Europa is an imposing functionary who, in his long black blouse and twisted pink sash, and his black astrakhan cap with an upstanding row of peacock feathers, might have stepped

¹ Before the War British subjects required passports only for the purpose of visiting Rumania, Russia and Turkey. On my father's advice, however, for use in emergencies, I had provided myself with a passport some years before this date.

out of the ranks of the Russian Ballet. No livery of buttons for the page-boys: they are attired in blood-red blouses and embroidered belts and baggy trousers thrust into top boots. The menservants, strapping peasants, with melancholy eyes, whom one sees scrubbing and scouring in silent service from dawn to dusk, wear their peasant blouses of a deep, rich red, engirdled by a broad leathern belt.

'An extraordinary variety of uniforms is to be seen in the streets for, besides the military and police, State employees, students and schoolboys wear uniform, while the street picture is further enlivened by the different liveries of cabmen, concierges, and house attendants, and the national dresses from the different parts of Russia. One sees all kinds of army uniforms, from the spotless white tunics and gleaming brass helmets of the Horse Guards to the flowing robes and furry busbies of the Cossacks.

'There are policemen in black with orange facings and astrakhan caps, students with peaked caps and uniforms of grey or dark green, concierges in long, blue overcoats with gold lace, and house attendants, or *dvorniks*, whom one may perceive winter and summer sweeping the pavement and roadway in front of their houses, in scarlet blouses and caps with a brass plate giving the address of the house to which they are attached. Familiar sights are Turcomans in immense shaggy hats of white sheepskin, and dark-skinned Caucasians in long-skirted kaftans of white or brown, with double rows of cartridge pockets across the breast, dagger of chased silver stuck in the belt, and high, sugar-loaf hat of astrakhan. The infinite variety of costumes forms an ever-changing picture.'

One of the most tantalising of the 'what-might-have-beens' of history is the line Russia's political development might have followed if the World War had never taken place. Already in the period I speak of changes were on the way. True, the Third Duma had been dissolved after an inglorious and ineffective career; but the period of foreign loans was over and Kokovtseff, the singularly hard-headed new Finance Minister, was getting the finances of the country in order. Meanwhile, the growth of industry, largely financed by French and British

capital, was bringing into existence a new class of labour and fostering the spread of Liberal ideas.

Already by 1913 the increase in the freedom of public opinion was very marked, my friend the late Robert Wilton, *Times* correspondent in St. Petersburg and a highly competent observer, told me. I could remember as a child my father showing me copies of English newspapers sent back from Russia with great patches blacked out with printer's ink by the Censor; and we had all read that terrible indictment of Tsarist rule, Stepniak's *Career of a Nihilist*—Stepniak was afterwards killed by a train at a London station. But the difference between 1913 and ten years before, Wilton declared, was the difference between night and day. Then no one hardly dared to mention politics even in private and the newspapers discussed foreign policy in the form of fables intelligible only to those able to read between the lines. The suppression of newspapers by the Government was of common occurrence.

In the study of history, there is nothing more piquant than the contrast between prediction and fulfilment in the march of events. The notes I jotted down in the course of my newspaper career record some astonishingly wrong guesses by personages who should have known better, as this narrative will disclose, and in the same way the summaries I made of my conversations with the leading politicians when I was in Russia show how elusively the truth about the real situation of a country hovers out of reach between such statements. Revolution and collapse were but four years away: behind the glitter of the Court, the bright pageantry of the street scene, messengers slipped in and out bound on the business of certain Russian exiles in Switzerland; but there was no one who read aright the writing on the wall unless it were Kokovtseff, the Finance Minister, who feared war as 'an uncertain and perilous venture', calculated only to weaken Russia.

I had a long talk with Kokovtseff, the 'strong man' of the Government, in his room at the rambling Ministry of Finance on the Sängers-Brücke. The Finance Minister was a small, sandy man with a pointed beard and glasses, who spoke French

stiffly with a strong Russian accent. He made it clear to me that he had no use for the Slavophiles. He described them as ambitious malcontents with no sense of responsibility, who incited to war yet, when it came, would sacrifice nothing, Briantchaninoff (one of the leaders – he entertained me afterwards at a sumptuous luncheon in Moscow) for example, who would not surrender '*une miette de sa fortune, ou plutôt celle de sa femme*' to the national cause. His Excellency admitted that there was considerable discontent in Russia, but in what country was there no discontent? Besides, in Russia, they invariably forgot to-morrow the discontent of to-day. Seeing how business had prospered during the recovery period after the Russo-Japanese War, the vast majority of people had not the slightest desire to fight for their Slav brethren in the Balkans.

'The Slavophiles,' said Kokovtseff, 'are under the impression that Austria-Hungary was bluffing in the Balkan question and that we ran no risk of war by standing up to her. They refused to believe that the Habsburg Monarchy had vital interests to defend.' I interrupted here to speak of the surprise caused in Vienna by Russia's acceptance of the principle of Albanian autonomy. '*Mon cher monsieur,*' said the minister, 'we thought that an autonomous Albania in one piece under a single ruler was better than four living limbs of Albania forcibly attached to the four Balkan States and inevitably destined to become a veritable nest of brigands in each.'

Regarding the Slavophile's reproach that Russia should have taken the lead of the Balkan States and acted as peace-maker between them after the war with Turkey, Kokovtseff declared, 'Before the Balkan war two Bulgarian Ministers, General Theodoroff and another, were here and I asked them if they preferred a strong or a weak Russia. They answered "A strong Russia," on which I said that in that event, Russia would have to keep the peace because she could not count on being strong as the result of war, always so uncertain a venture.' The minister spoke a great deal about Russia's 'marvellous' financial recovery since the Japanese war. They had had no loan since 1909 and he was glad to think that they would be able to

meet the new army increase out of the Budget surplus, without having to introduce fresh taxation.

I was not much impressed by the Russian politicians I met. They struck me as being self-complacent and ineffective, in which respect they resembled our own British Liberals. Professor Miljukoff of the Constitutional Democratic Party, the so-called 'Cadets', expressed rather cautious approval of the Government's 'temperate' policy, saying that there was a strong party in Austria driving to war. No doubt, the Russian Government was actuated by the fear of revolution which he thought was exaggerated. In his opinion the current state of the country resembled that of France after the Bourbon Restoration (from 1815 to 1830) or of Prussia from the Revolution of 1848 to 1895.

In the light of after events, the state of Russia in 1913 must have much more nearly approximated that of France in the years immediately preceding 1789, perhaps not financially, but politically speaking.

Dr. Alexander Gutchkoff, Chief of the Octobrist Party and leader of the House in the Third Duma, was Mayor of Moscow. His splendid mansion, where I called upon him, was typical of the sybaritic luxury in which the wealthy Moscow merchants were wont to live. Gutchkoff told me that the large majority of the government classes, including several ministers, were in favour of a more active policy in keeping with Russia's leading rôle in the Balkans. According to all Russian traditions, Russian public opinion favoured the Slav and welcomed the rise of the Slav. It wanted the Near Eastern question to be settled once and for all and not by means of a patched-up improvisation like the new State of Albania. The Near Eastern question had been postponed and not settled.

Gutchkoff suggested that the Government's peace-at-any-price policy was inspired by the pro-German party at Court which feared that war might unloose revolutionary agitation. He did not agree with this view or with that of the Liberals and Radicals, who claimed that a successful war would lead to an outburst of reaction. Russia was in a period of reaction already. Public opinion was exasperated by the measures taken

by the Government against the Nationalist Press, notably the *Novoe Vremya* (the oldest and most influential Russian newspaper at that time), which Sazonoff had chastised for its ultra-Slavophile tone by withdrawing the government advertising. The chief discontent was manifested by the workmen. They were the best organised, by means of their secret committees, and well disciplined.

It was with considerable interest that I went to the French Embassy in St. Petersburg to call on Delcassé, who was then Ambassador to Russia. His behaviour since his enforced resignation as Foreign Minister over the first of the Moroccan crises precipitated by the Kaiser's visit to Tangier¹ had been worthy of an ancient Roman. Without recrimination, in silence and great dignity, he withdrew into private life, from which he only emerged to serve France and the Entente Cordiale, to which he had sacrificed his career, once more at the post of duty.

He had the reputation of being unapproachable to newspaper men. But a letter of introduction which I brought him from my old friend, Jules Cambon – it was, rather excitingly, sealed – secured me an interview. Delcassé was a tiny little man, swart envisaged, short-sighted and remarkably ugly, with the hands and feet almost of a child. He impressed me with his marvellous faculty for figures and the way he rapped out statistics to illustrate his arguments, crisply and precisely, with never a note. He was not very expansive, and could not be drawn to express himself about the situation in Russia. About the Entente Cordiale, however, he declared that he foresaw its constant expansion because there were no questions dividing France and Great Britain either (1) politically – both desired to preserve the balance of power in Europe and both were *conservatrice*, that is to say, supporters of the existing order, (2) commercially – they did not compete with, but supplemented one another or (3) colonially – both were resolved to keep and consolidate what they had and resist the expansion of other Powers at their expense. He expressed considerable doubt as to the accuracy of the contention that the Germans accepted

¹ See pp. 142, 143.

the present distribution of the earth without desiring any further acquisition of territory. He was a strong advocate of the Channel Tunnel and believed that the British Government would end by dropping its opposition to the undertaking, as the tunnel could be so easily destroyed in the event of war.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME PROPHECIES

WHEN Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, the *Daily Telegraph's* war correspondent, and I joined the Crown Prince of Serbia's Army soon after Bulgaria had attacked her former Serbian and Greek allies in July 1913 (the second Balkan War), the only other Englishman with us at headquarters was Major C. B. Thomson, our military attaché in the Balkans. Headquarters were under canvas on a mountain top some miles from Kumanovo, a peak that bore on the map the unpronounceable label of Crn Vrh.

Both in Vienna and at Sir Henry Wilson's breakfast-table in London, I had heard of C. B. Thomson. He was represented to me alternately as a bit of a 'political soldier' or as a gay bachelor, whose success with the ladies, particularly the beautiful Rumanian ladies at Bucharest, was depicted as being peculiarly enviable. That summer of 1913 was blistering hot in the Macedonian hills. Cholera and typhus were rampant, and in the tent we shared at headquarters Ashmead and I used to wash and shave in Giesshübler water, imported by mule-back from Uskub (Skoplje). We lived principally on sucking-pig which travelled with headquarters on the hoof—piercing squeals from the cookhouse were an infallible indication of the luncheon menu—and strong red wine from the Drina, not exactly an ideal hot weather diet with the temperature at 104 in the shade. The heat on our mountain with the disenvowelled name was indescribable and I got into the way of going for walks in the surrounding valleys before the sun was up. Major Thomson had the same idea, with the result that we often strolled together.

Lean and tall and elegant in his blue undress uniform, with a slightly quizzical expression conveyed by a rather sharp-ridged nose and humorous blue eye, C. B. Thomson was a real charmer. He was in no accepted sense of that singularly horrible expression 'a lady's man', but he had a personal magnetism which, if it captivated women as easily as it did men, must certainly have brought him the success with the other sex with which I had heard him credited. I found him highly intelligent, a good linguist, an excellent talker – in a word, an altogether delightful companion.

But when it came to his political views, I began to understand why it might be that certain of his contemporaries distrusted him. This finished product of an English public school and Woolwich ('The Shop') – he was a Sapper: the best brains of the British Army have always been found in the R.E. – was an advanced Radical in his opinions and an ardent admirer of Lloyd George. And here I should explain that this was at a time, or not long after, when it was the fashion in society to denounce Lloyd George, author of the famous Limehouse speech, in terms of almost scurrilous abuse, in much the same way, I might add, as President Roosevelt is scarified by the similar social stratum in the United States to-day. Nowadays, when the Universities have gone Communist, and part of the Church is following suit, a Bolshevik major can be no novelty; but back in 1913 a British General Staff officer with extreme radical views was something of a monstrosity, and I was startled accordingly.

C. B. Thomson was ambitious. He wanted to enter politics, to stand as a Radical: he had plans for redressing the grievances of labour, for aiding 'the forgotten man'. As I walked with him among the chocolate-coloured hills or rode at his side along the burbling Vardar (I had bought a half-Arab charger from a captain in the Royal Guard for £35), he told me of his dreams and aspirations. An elderly man of means, who lived in the Midlands, he confided to me, had faith in him and had offered to defray the expense of a parliamentary election for him at any time.

It all sounded pretty fantastic as C. B. Thomson poured it

into my ears in that summer of 1913. But it turned out not to be as fantastic as I thought. Having survived the War, in which he served with distinction on the General Staff in France, my companion of our Macedonian rambles duly entered Parliament in the Labour interest, and, mainly through Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's warm friendship and belief in his ability, was ultimately made a Labour peer and as Lord Thomson became Air Minister. His death in the flaming wreck of the great airship to which he had pinned his faith was a dramatic close to an unusual career. Success did not spoil my friend, the Radical Major. He never forgot those days at Crn Vrh and was always glad to see me when we chanced to meet at the House of Commons or, later on, at the Lords.

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I used to think that genius was the secret of success. I know better now. A man may have a touch of genius in the possession of a mind of quite unusual calibre, yet his character may lack certain qualities indispensable for utilising a brilliant intellect to its best advantage. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, with whom I shared a tent and servant on this campaign, was an unusually gifted person. I met him on and off in London through our mutual friend, Wade Chance, who must surely enjoy the widest acquaintance with people in the social and political world of any American who ever came to England, but this was the first opportunity I had to study his very talented but curiously uneven character. And, believe me, the way to know a man is to share with him for weeks on end the vicissitudes of heat, dirt, smells, bad food, flies and verminous trains and quarters, as Ashmead and I shared them together, that summer in the Balkans.

As a stable companion Ashmead was self-centred, impatient, unreliable and frequently ill-tempered, not to say, abominably rude, while in his relations with the Serbian General Staff, whose guests, after all, we were, he often displayed a tactlessness that made me writhe. But these shortcomings were more than counterbalanced by the fine temper of his mind, a pretty wit and a certain *panache* as though every succeeding day were big with adventure, whether this were a 'scoop' for the paper

or a run of luck at the gaming-table. He reminded me of Dryden's well-known lines:

'Hast so much wit and mirth and spleen about thee,
There is no living with thee, nor without thee!'

He had an astonishing memory. He was the only man I ever met who could perform the curious feat of repeating by rote the names and titles of all Napoleon's Marshals; and, on our journeyings on horseback together through the Macedonian hills, it sufficed for me to give him a single line from any of the better-known passages of Shakespeare for him to complete the speech in question and often, indeed, the entire scene. He could quote Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* by the page, and the same with Gibbon: I can hear him now, with enormous unction, reeling off the proper-minded Lecky's somewhat sanctimonious definition of a courtesan in *A History of European Morals*. Added to this, he was an absolutely first-class journalist. His style was trenchant and simple – his dispatches from the First Balkan War and from the Dardanelles were models of their kind, as good, I think, as Napier, whom he so greatly admired – and with it were allied an excellent news sense and a personal fearlessness and enterprise, which secured for him some of the most notable 'beats' in the history of war correspondence.

His personal experience of modern warfare was unusually wide. He was still in his 'teens – at Marlborough, or not long out of it – when his father, Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, a well-known and influential M.P., took him with him to the Greco-Turkish War of 1897. Thereafter, apart from the Boer War in which he served as an officer in the Bedfordshire Regiment, he covered as war correspondent the Russo-Japanese War, the Italo-Turkish War (his dispatches about the Italian atrocities in Tripoli created a sensation), the two Balkan Wars and the World War.

With his well-equipped mind and unshakable self-assurance, one would have thought that a great political career stood before him. Apart from his father's political connections, his

uncle was married to the great Victorian heiress and philanthropist, the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, whose name the uncle adopted on their marriage, and, indeed, Ashmead cherished political ambitions—at the time I write of he had unsuccessfully contested a parliamentary seat and published a political novel, something on the lines of *Endymion*. But when, after the World War, he was ultimately returned to Parliament, he made little impression in the House of Commons and, if I remember rightly, did not present himself for re-election.

He had a nice sense of humour. At Uskub (Skoplje) the hotels were closed owing to cholera and Ashmead and I found a bedroom which we shared in the house of a Frenchwoman, a lady who had at one time exercised a certain ancient and dishonourable profession at Salonika, but was now retired. Not trusting her assurance that the beds were '*bien propres*', before retiring we respectively encircled ourselves with a regular *circumvallum* of Keating's powder, in the hope of repelling the assaults of the enormous and ravenously hungry Macedonian fleas. The hope was vain. In the middle of the night, as I lay tossing and scratching, I heard Ashmead: 'Valentine, are you asleep?' 'No,' I said. 'I can't sleep, either, with all this noise,' Ashmead replied. 'What noise?' I asked. 'Fleas sneezing!' said Ashmead.

One day, when he was submerged by one of his periodical financial crises, my wife met him in Jermyn Street. 'Ashmead,' said she, 'why *do* you keep on going bankrupt?' 'Just the high cost of loving,' was the imperturbable rejoinder.

When he died, unexpectedly and prematurely, stricken down by pneumonia at Lisbon, I warrant there was not a single man who had ever been in the field with Ashmead-Bartlett but felt that he had lost a friend and Fleet Street one of its most gifted sons and most assertive characters.

The *Daily Mail* sent me off on odd missions at times. One of the oddest was to investigate a cock-and-bull story to the effect that Cardinal Rampolla, Pope Leo XIII's famous Secretary of State, had met his death by poison. I left Charing Cross

on a bitter afternoon, Sunday December 28, 1913, not in the least averse from visiting Rome for the first time, but somewhat at a loss to know how to proceed with the mission entrusted to me. Needless to say, I found it quite impossible to verify this *canard*; but I was interested to learn that the Cardinal had died at 12.5 a.m., that Cardinal Merry del Val, who was then Secretary of State, was apprised at 12.40 a.m. and that within a very short time, two high clerics of the Vatican were in the dead Cardinal's rooms, going through his papers. This action, I was told, was prompted by the fact that, some years previously, on the death of a Cardinal, some of his papers fell into the hands of his relatives, who published them.

The Vatican, which has practised statesmanship for more than a thousand years, takes no chances. This was my first experience of Vatican diplomacy.

I have seen two men in my life who had the faces of saints. One was Father Robert Butler, Rector of St. Charles's College, a long since vanished Catholic school in London where I spent a few months in my extreme youth: the other was Pope Pius X. I attended one of the Pope's audiences when I was in Rome. Here is the note I made at the time:

'Suddenly Pius X appeared in the doorway, clad all in white, in a white serge cassock with a short cape, broad cuffs of white watered silk and a little white skull-cap. Round his neck was a gold chain supporting the pectoral cross and on his right hand a large antique ring. It was an apparition of white. The Pope's face and hands are pale, with the dead-white paleness of paper, and the hair protruding from beneath his small white cap is white as ashes, not silvery. He walks very slowly with small steps and his gait is the gait of a little child. But his manner is not the manner of an old man. It is the manner of one in fragile health. When he pronounced the Papal benediction and afterwards made a short speech in Italian to a couple of women teachers in charge of some orphans, his voice, though low, was firm and resonant. As he turned to bless us on parting, the sunshine pouring in through the high window threw his face in shadow so as to hide the colour of his eyes, but not the expression of

great gentleness which rests upon his face. The benediction spoken, he turned to the door again and with his curious, tripping step very slowly disappeared along the adjacent gallery; a frail white figure in a framework of purple and gold.'

I had a memorable interview with one of the most picturesque figures in Rome at that time, the venerable Cardinal Agliardi, head of the Cancellaria, then in the eighty-eighth year of his age. I say 'memorable' because the aged prelate, who had been one of the most distinguished of Vatican diplomats in his time – it was he who conducted the long and delicate negotiations with Bismarck which put an end to the *Kulturkampf* in Germany – ventured upon a prediction to me regarding the future relationship between the Vatican and the Italian State which has a curious ring to-day when, by agreement with Fascist Italy, the temporal power of the Popes has been re-established.

The Cardinal received me at the Cancellaria, that beautiful Renaissance building of straight lines and flat front, with its vast stone staircase where Count Rossi perished under the assassin's knife in 1848. A door in an open loggia gave on to a Moorish-like patio by which I gained the Cardinal's suite. His study was crammed with ornate furniture, with a number of song-birds in gilt cages, including a blackbird, and a magnificent white cat curled up on a purple cushion. Pictures – old masters and modern religious paintings incongruously side by side – filled every inch of the walls and a desk was set out with a collection of religious statues.

Cardinal Agliardi was a hale old gentleman, wearing a scarlet soutane and skull-cap and an enormous yellow topaz on his finger. The white cat was perched on his shoulder as he sat in a high-backed old Spanish chair, a regal figure in scarlet, with the brilliant Roman sunshine streaming in upon the vivid setting – it was like one of those conventional paintings of Roman Cardinals taking their ease one sees in auction-rooms and nowhere else, I don't know why. At some remote period in his life His Eminence had been Apostolic Delegate



LORD THOMSON

at Bombay and his first question was 'And how is my dear India?' He disconcerted me considerably by talking to me, as to a contemporary, of events which had taken place before I was born or while I was yet in the nursery such as the Siege of Rome or Queen Victoria's first Jubilee.

But, for all his great age, his mind was alert and fresh. His views were vigorously patriotic and he asserted that Italy must certainly retain possession of the Aegean Islands which had fallen into her hands in the war against Turkey (the Tripoli campaign). But he declared there could be no *rapprochement* between the Vatican and the Quirinal, then or at any time: the antithesis between the Papacy and the Italian State was the essence of the future existence of the Holy See. 'The Pope,' he said, 'must remain independent. He cannot, therefore, leave the Vatican and receive honours from the troops and so forth which the Italian Government would gladly accord him, lest the other Powers should ever ask, as the result of the Papacy abandoning its position, whether some act of the Vatican was not inspired by the Italian State. I am Italian and proud to be Italian. The Holy Father is also Italian. There can be a *rapprochement des esprits* but never any official reconciliation.'

It sounds like a wrong guess; but I wonder. One has heard that, almost before the ink was dry on the Concordat between the Vatican and Mussolini, Pope Pius XI recognised it as a fatal mistake and certainly the march of events since then – the Abyssinian campaign and the Nazi persecution of the Catholics, for instance – can have offered the Supreme Pontiff little inducement to revise his opinion. Old Cardinal Agliardi has long since been called to his last account and it is almost a quarter of a century since his words were spoken; but there is ample evidence to suggest that, more than ever to-day, they evoke a responsive echo in the hearts of many members, and those not all foreign, of the Sacred College.

I find, scattered here and there among my diaries and notebooks, one or two similar examples of prophetic utterances. I was present at the Conference of Bucharest, in the summer of 1913, which settled the terms of peace on the conclusion of

the Second Balkan War. The Serbians and the Greeks, particularly the Greeks, wreaked a savage revenge on Bulgaria for her treachery in attacking them, her erstwhile allies, and under the leadership of Venizelos, whom the Bulgars in their despair denounced as 'the Shylock of the Conference', virtually stripped her of all her gains in the war against the Turk. I was with the Bulgarians at their hotel the afternoon peace was signed and I remember one of the delegates lifting his hands to heaven and calling upon me with tears in his voice to mark his words that the day would come when Bulgaria would make good the bitter injustice put upon her at Bucharest. Of course, the day did come. The World War brought Bulgaria in on the side of the Central Powers and against her blood brothers, the Russians, because she was resolved to regain what she had lost.

The late Alfred Stead, son of W. T. Stead, who had many business interests in the Balkans, was a friend of mine and I saw a lot of him on my various trips to South-Eastern Europe in the period immediately preceding the War. He was firmly committed to the idea of a Greater Serbia, in favour of which he had written extensively. Under date May 7, 1914, my diary records: 'Drink at Capsa's' with Stead. He said to me, "I'm going to see within the next few years whether all my work of the last eight years is to come to fruition – a Greater Servia stretching across Austria-Hungary to Dalmatia and Croatia and taking in half of Hungary."

His work came to fruition all right, and within five years. But Stead did not live to see it.

I have kept to the last the most successful prophecy I have to record. Its author is Field-Marshal Lord Cavan and it is contained in a letter dated August 22, 1918, he wrote me from Italy, from the Headquarters of the Fourteenth Corps which he was then commanding. In that letter Lord Cavan says:

'We have had all the luck so far on this flank and I have high hopes of the rest of the campaigning year. It will be Berlin and *not* London talking peace in November.'

¹ A famous Bucharest café.

This is the only instance I have come across of the approximate date of the Armistice being so accurately predicted.

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Sunday, June 28, 1914, was a warm and sunny day. I was back in London for a spell, working at Carmelite House. At that time I had a small flat on the very top of Clement's Inn, with a wonderful view across the house-tops to the far side of the river, and as it was within a few minutes' walk of the office, I generally lunched at home on Sundays. Apart from the rumblings of civil war in Ireland, things were quiet this Sunday and I lunched at home as usual. I was alone. About 2 p.m. the telephone rang. It was the young man in charge of the *Daily Mail* 'Tape Room', where the ticker machines were placed, to read me the brief Reuter message announcing the assassination of the Archduke.

Without being wise after the event, I can honestly say I took the gravest view of the possible consequences of the Archduke's murder from the first moment. A week or two later I backed my opinion by strenuously resisting an attempt to take me off the London end of the crisis and send me back to Ireland against the more than problematical prospect of an armed rising in Ulster. Anybody could go and sit about at Belfast or Derry City, waiting for something to happen, but I had formed important and useful diplomatic connections in London, and I was getting the news. Some busybody told Northcliffe that I had refused to go back to Ulster because I was afraid of being shot, and we had a passage of arms about it. But I stuck to my guns, for I knew in my bones that I was right and that flames were already leaping among the heaps of tinder scattered all through South-Eastern Europe.

On hearing the news about the Archduke I immediately called up the principal Embassies, starting with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Count Mensdorf. Note, now, how the nations run true to form. There was nobody at the Austro-Hungarian Embassy, that sunny Sunday – 'all the gentlemen are up the river', a flunkey informed me. At the French Embassy M. Cambon was out of town, but I remembered that M. de Fleuriau, the extremely serious-minded and

hard-working Counsellor of Embassy (he later became Ambassador) lived on the premises. I felt sure he would be at the post of duty, and he was. Only the Germans were present in full force at Carlton House Terrace and Herr von Schubert, the Second Secretary, incoherently grateful for the early information, dashed off to break the news to the Ambassador at his lunch.

CHAPTER XIX

WORLD WAR. THE CENSORSHIP

ONCE when I was on a swimming party at the Lloyd Osbournes' place on the Riviera – he was Robert Louis Stevenson's stepson and collaborator – situated on the very tip of the Cap d'Antibes, a pretty girl challenged me to dive from the highest of the diving recesses contrived in the rocks. From the point in question to the ocean below was a matter of twenty or twenty-five feet, I suppose. I had never dived from such a height before, but in the circumstances I nerved myself for the plunge. I can still recall the rather shivery sense of excitement that took possession of me in the final moment I stood poised on the brink, before heading downward into forty feet of deep blue, crystal-clear water.

It was much in this frame of mind that I retired to my bed at Clement's Inn in the small hours of August 5, 1914, knowing that since midnight we had been at war with Germany. I had no illusions about the magnitude of the ordeal before the Allies. I had the greatest admiration for the German Army. I had studied it for the past thirteen years: I had attended the Imperial manoeuvres three years in succession: in association with German officers, in my observation of the Army in training, I had formed some idea of how tough and unbeatable it was. I knew there was no army in the world in which the officers took their work more seriously, or where greater care was expended in developing a spirit of responsibility and leadership in the N.C.O.s.

I had some acquaintance with our commitments in the matter of an expeditionary force. The figure I had heard mentioned was 100,000 men, about six divisions; but I did not anticipate then that our military effort would exceed this total,

plus the necessary replacements. Like everybody else, I had the most implicit faith in the British Navy – Jutland was still below the horizon, twenty-one months away: as I figured it out, the French and the Russians would do the bulk of the land fighting, while we kept the seas. But when I remembered the deadly efficiency, the united national spirit, of the German fighting machine as I knew it, and compared therewith the signs I had seen of military unpreparedness and national disunity, not only in Russia but also in France, I was conscious of a sinking sense of suspense only comparable to that which was to overcome me years later, as I stood poised to dive above that swimming-pool at the Cap.

Some men started the War in the ranks and rose to be generals. I reversed the process. Almost my first contacts with the Expeditionary Force were as the guest of Sir John French at British G.H.Q. in France, discussing the military situation tête-à-tête with him in his study, with confidential reports to read and a Headquarters' car to take me about the front, more or less as I liked. Thereafter, as one of the original five war correspondents first accredited to the British Armies in the field, I had the entrée almost everywhere. I stuck out a thankless job until after Loos (September 1915) when, it becoming apparent that the authorities had neither the desire nor the ability to use our services intelligently, I resigned to take a commission in the Irish Guards. My period of training at home over, it greatly diverted me to find myself back at the front where, not a year before, I had strutted in and out of headquarters messes, talking to Army and Corps commanders almost as though they were human beings and not demigods enthroned on almost inaccessible heights, where I now footed it beside my platoon on roads along which of yore the C.-in-C.'s Rolls-Royce or the grey Vauxhalls of the Press Château had whisked me.

I had some amusing encounters. Once when the Irish Guards were billeted at a village called Mailly Maillet on the Somme and I was Picquet Officer, I was told to take a squad of men and get the village street cleaned up. I was busy super-

vising this scavenging operation when Geoffrey Dawson, Editor of *The Times*, who was stopping at G.H.Q. and had been calling on the 1st Guards Brigade, came along. He was not a little astonished when I stepped out of a cloud of malodorous dust to greet him. On another occasion, in 1918, I was in charge of a working party making a road on the Flesquières Ridge and Sir Douglas Haig clattered by on his horse, followed by his pennant-bearer. My men and I, and the German dead scattered everywhere from our last advance, had the slope to ourselves and I was the only officer in sight as Haig passed quite close to me. Needless to say, he did not recognise the extremely muddy Guards subaltern who saluted him, and I did not expect him to; but it amused me to remember that the last time we had met face to face was at his château at Aire, three years before, when he had talked to me long and earnestly about the shell shortage and the way it had hampered success in the Neuve Chapelle attack.

When war broke out, I was officially the chief *Daily Mail* war correspondent, vice Sir William Maxwell, whose campaigning experience (originally as representative of the old *Standard*) dated back to Egypt in the eighties. In the normal way, the 5th of August would have found me at the theatre of war, awaiting the first shot. But in the preceding period the War Office had regulated the whole question of the war correspondents' status. In the event of war, only accredited correspondents were to be admitted to the army in the field, subject to military control and discipline, to which end a comprehensive set of censorship regulations had been drawn up.

War came, but the war correspondents were kept in London: the War Office remained deaf to all remonstrances. My first instinct was to join the Army, as most of my friends were doing. But Northcliffe was confident he would be able to get the ban lifted. Sooner or later the nation would insist on hearing the truth about the Army's achievements: recruiting would depend on it; my most effective contribution to the national effort would be to be patient and hold myself in readiness to do the work for which I was best fitted and especially trained, he told me. Once the ban was raised, there would be great

opportunities for the right men, acquainted with continental conditions and the chief continental armies and, above all, speaking French and German, as I did, to report the War on the different fronts.

Meanwhile, the doings of the British Expeditionary Force, since its departure from our shores in mid-August in the greatest secrecy, remained cloaked in mystery. No official information was forthcoming – the daily communiqué was not instituted until much later, in imitation of the French – and the wildest and most ridiculous stories were current, of astounding victories as well as of terrible disasters. Inevitably, the public's thirst for information led the newspapers to try and satisfy it from the reports of unauthorised correspondents who hung on the skirts of the Army in the field, stringing together such accounts of the fighting as they could from the usually alarmist and misleading stories told by the wounded. The most notorious example of this was Hamilton Fyfe's dispatch to *The Times* about the Retreat from Mons. No doubt it presented a true picture of certain isolated aspects of a situation which was always grave and at times desperate. The point is that, with properly accredited correspondents working under the direction and censorship of G.H.Q., such a dispatch would not have been written or, if written, would never have got past the censor's desk. What happened in the case of the Hamilton Fyfe message is that it was not censored at the front but, reaching *The Times* office in the early hours of a Sunday morning, was rushed down to the Press Bureau and there not only passed for publication but touched up and amended in an even more alarmist sense by F. E. Smith, the future Lord Birkenhead, and then tossed like a bomb to burst upon the unsuspecting public in the quiet of a Sabbath morning in a special edition of *The Times*.

As mentioned elsewhere in this narrative, I paid several unauthorised visits to the front myself. In the course of one of these, in September 1914, when the Army was on the Aisne, I had a conversation on the subject of war correspondents with Mr. Winston Churchill. Now Mr. Churchill resembles the chameleon in this that, under the sway of a powerful imagina-

tion, he is always apt to key his tone to his surroundings. On this occasion he was obviously strongly under the influence of the martial atmosphere about him. I mention this, because I have far too much respect for Mr. Churchill's statesmanlike qualities to believe that the views he expressed that day represented his considered opinions on the rôle of the Press in war-time.

But let my diary speak:

'When I went into the Hotel de l'Ecu at Beauvais, Winston Churchill, with Freddie Guest, was at the table d'hôte, eating pears. He was dressed in the field kit of an Elder Brother of Trinity House, with his greatcoat and cap on the window. He said I was to report nothing about his movements – if I did, we would not be allowed to print it. "This is no war for war correspondents," he told me. "If I were Prime Minister, I would send a file of Grenadiers and shut every newspaper office in London." I retorted that in that case he would not be Prime Minister long. He said, "The newspapers have no business to send out war correspondents at all. You ought to be able to invent the sort of details you want," and then went on to speak of the Hamilton Fyfe dispatch to *The Times*: "I'd like to give you a two-column interview on my experience of the harm *The Times* has done." Freddie Guest intervened to say that "the fellows at the front were all as mad as hell with *The Times*, which had spoilt their best efforts".'

These representations were, of course, in complete misapprehension of the circumstances in which *The Times* dispatch was written and passed for publication. Lord Kitchener, as Secretary of State for War, was responsible for the ban against the war correspondents. In this, no doubt, he was merely expressing the opinion of the military everywhere that in war newspapers are potential sources of invaluable information to the enemy and should be strictly controlled, if not suppressed. But I also believe that Lord Kitchener meant to keep the control of the War in his hands. He was an extremely long-sighted person and he recognised that, to do this, he must also

control the censorship. To allow war correspondents at the front, however, was to delegate to the Army headquarters in the field the censorship of the news emanating from the seat of war, that is to say, in Kitchener's opinion, to place a dangerous weapon in the hands of the anti-Kitchener party at G.H.Q. Sir John French firmly believed that Kitchener's objections were based on the fact that he was planning to take command in the field himself of the new Kitchener armies and that, as soon as the new armies were ready to proceed overseas, the ban against the war correspondents would be raised.

Whatever the grounds, from the start Kitchener set his face against the war correspondents. When tackled on the subject, he entrenched himself behind the argument that Joffre was opposed to the idea; and it required a personal interview between Joffre and Northcliffe, at which I acted as interpreter, to dispose of this contention. Previous to this, on French's insistence, Lord Kitchener had consented to modify his attitude to the extent of agreeing to allow three separate parties of correspondents, five in each batch, representing the 'penny' and the 'halfpenny' newspapers respectively, and one party of photographers, to make a brief tour of the front. But two mines had to be sprung under his feet before his opposition to the admission of war correspondents to G.H.Q. on a permanent basis was overcome. One was Northcliffe's interview with Joffre mentioned above; the other was the detailed story of the Neuve Chapelle attack (in March 1915) circulated anonymously to all newspapers throughout the country by the London News Agency and published on April 19, 1915.

I was the author of the Neuve Chapelle story which I wrote from material I collected while staying at G.H.Q. as Sir John French's private guest, soon after the battle. It was a piece of descriptive war correspondence in the old manner, mentioning units and individuals by name, censored and passed for publication at G.H.Q., instead of in London, as the 'Eye Witness' contributions had been. My intention was to show that it was possible for a correspondent to do full justice to the feats of the Army in the field without divulging military information and at the same time establish the principle that the

logical place of censorship for news from the front was at the front and not at home. The Neuve Chapelle dispatch had an electrifying effect upon public opinion and blew the last fragments of the ban against war correspondents sky-high. Within a month of its publication, five officially accredited correspondents were installed at G.H.Q.

But I am anticipating. There was a growing feeling among a section of the Cabinet that the Press should be represented at the front and at a meeting of the Army Council, at which Sir John French was present, Mr. Lloyd George brought the question up. Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. A. J. (afterwards Lord) Balfour supported him. Lord Kitchener played his Joffre card; but French did not bear out the contention that Joffre opposed the idea and eventually Colonel Brinsley FitzGerald, French's secretary, was deputed to go into the matter. According to Brinsley FitzGerald's statement to me, Kitchener subsequently got Millerand, the French War Minister, to London on another pretext and there induced him to send a telegram to Paris, practically suggesting that the French Government should object to the presence of war correspondents at the front. The French Cabinet duly expressed itself in this sense. As a matter of fact, FitzGerald said, his inquiries showed that Joffre did not care one way or the other, but that a strong feeling existed in favour of there being a censorship at General Headquarters and not in Paris only. As for French, he had not given the matter much thought until it was brought to his attention. 'What,' he said to his friend, George Moore, 'isn't "Eye Witness" good enough for them?'

'Eye Witness' was that distinguished military engineer and man of letters, my friend, Colonel, now Major-General Sir Ernest Swinton, known to all lovers of fiction as 'Ole Luk Oie', author of *The Green Curve* and other brilliant collections of short stories. Attached to the General Staff at G.H.Q., with the late Duke of Northumberland, then Lord Percy, as assistant, his duty was to compile from time to time accounts of the doings of our men at the front which, while giving nothing away to the enemy, were intended to satisfy the insistent public demand for news from the army in the field. As an institution,

'Eye Witness' represented the Cabinet's first fumbling and belated attempt to cope with an untenable situation. In his book *Eye Witness* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) Sir Ernest Swinton describes how, early in September 1914, when the Army was on the Aisne and he was engaged on military engineering work at home, he was unexpectedly ordered to London to report to the Secretary of State for War in person. Lord Kitchener informed him bluntly that he would proceed to G.H.Q. forthwith and act as correspondent with the Army. He would submit his articles to Lord Kitchener in person for censorship.

As I picture that interview, I am irresistibly reminded of my friend, Edmund Gwenn's, story about an experience that befell this distinguished actor when he was serving as a driver in the Royal Horse Artillery in the War. He was sent for by the battery sergeant-major who said to him, 'Driver Gwenn, I understand you are an actor?' 'Yes, sergeant-major,' Teddy, stiffly at attention, replied. 'On Toosday,' said the S.M., 'we 'ave the regimental sports. You will dress up as a woman and amuse the guests between the events. March out!'

Colonel Swinton's contributions were abundantly censored. That many were innocuous to the point of triviality by the time the Military Secretary and the Director of Military Intelligence at G.H.Q., and Lord Kitchener, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the War Office, and the Press Bureau at home, had done with them, was no fault of this talented writer. When I met him at G.H.Q. in March 1915, I had the impression that he and Percy were nobody's children, objects of compassion or suspicion, according to the calibre of the military intellect they had to deal with. Between September 11, 1914, when the job started, and July 18, 1915, when it ceased, 'Eye Witness' contributed 103 articles to the Press; but from the moment the first official war correspondents were appointed to G.H.Q. in May 1915 his usefulness was at an end and 'Eye Witness', like any other old soldier, faded away, unwept and unsung. But Colonel Swinton went on to his greatest achievement in the War, the invention of the tank.

One day in February 1915 Lady Cunard invited me to lunch

— as she said, to meet George Moore. I was under the impression that she meant the Irish novelist until I found myself shaking hands with a burly, brown-haired and brown-eyed Californian, who, I discovered, shared a house at 94 Lancaster Gate with Sir John French. With all the American's capacity for hero-worship Moore idolised French. He felt that the way the nation had been kept in the dark concerning the heroic achievements of the British Expeditionary Force and its leader was a rank injustice to both and instanced the Army's magnificent stand in defence of the Channel ports at Ypres, which it was left to an American writer, Will Irwin, with facts mainly supplied by George Moore, to be the first to describe (in the *Daily Mail*). For reasons which are still obscure to me, this 'scoop' of my friend Bill Irwin's rankled in the bosom of our War Office and every obstacle was placed in his way, as far as the British front was concerned, when he came over again as war correspondent with the American Expeditionary Force on America's entry into the War.

Lord Beaverbrook and others have made it clear that it was not the shell shortage alone that led to the formation of the Coalition Government. But it was one of the weapons which Lloyd George employed in his campaign in favour of a more vigorous prosecution of the War, using for this purpose Lord Northcliffe and the Northcliffe Press. The person originally responsible for turning the flood-light of newspaper publicity upon this question was George Moore. He was John French's friend. He knew that Kitchener had not been consulted regarding French's appointment to command the British Expeditionary Force and realised that Kitchener would not be averse from seeing French replaced by a general of less independent character, especially after the incident at Dunkirk in December 1914, when Kitchener informed Joffre that he (Kitchener) could replace French by Sir Ian Hamilton, if Joffre so desired.¹

French had his faults, but scheming was not one of them. He never had a suspicious mind and it irked his friends — he was a man of strong friendships — to see how indifferent he

¹ See p. 235.

was to the machinations of his critics and also how powerless to grapple with them behind the blanket of mystery which at this date, February 1915, still obscured the doings of the Army in the field. George Moore was a successful American business man who had made a large fortune and he was well versed in the political game. In all sincerity he believed his friend to be one of England's greatest captains and he was unwilling to see him sacrificed without a fight. But he realised that there was a real danger of this as long as the achievements of the British troops and the qualities of leadership their Commander had displayed at Mons, the Marne and Ypres remained virtually a closed book. In such a situation his first instinct – the natural American instinct – was to start a newspaper campaign.

That I thus became the first link in the chain of events that culminated in the *Daily Mail's* sensational attack on Lord Kitchener, three months later, was due, I imagine, to the fact that Lady Cunard, at whose house in Cavendish Square I frequently lunched or dined, had spoken of me to Moore as a young man who enjoyed Lord Northcliffe's favour but also to the influence wielded by the *Daily Mail*. Moore found in me a ready listener, baffled as I was by the Government's incomprehensible unwillingness to make any effective use for propaganda purposes of that extremely efficient and patriotic institution, the British Press. On taking charge of the *Daily Mail* war service on the outbreak of war, one of the first things I did was to arrange with our correspondents in Holland to furnish me daily with the leading German newspapers – I used to supply Mr. Asquith at Downing Street with *Simplissimus* and other German comic journals for the Prime Minister's amusement – and reading these regularly, I perceived what skilful play the German High Command made with the Press for the purpose of bolstering up feeling at home and decrying the Allies in neutral countries. I also read the American newspapers and saw how, while full justice was done to the exploits of the French and German armies, the British contribution to the common cause was virtually ignored, through the ineptitude of Downing Street.

Later on, after Northcliffe's savage attack on Kitchener, George Moore had to pay for his loyalty to French by being made the butt of all kinds of scurrilous allegations, including sundry anonymous denunciations which led, I believe, to his telephone being tapped and his house watched by the Special Branch of Scotland Yard. As the result of an intimate association with him over a period of many months, I can only say that I found him actuated by no other motive than that of the warmest friendship and admiration for French and the belief that the highest interests of the Empire would be served by securing him the support of the Government and the confidence of the public in the command in France. But Northcliffe's broadside against Kitchener reacted disastrously upon French. By the time it appeared, events had passed beyond my ken—I was already permanently stationed at G.H.Q. for the *Daily Mail*. Neither French nor Moore was aware of Northcliffe's intention to take this bold and drastic step—as far as I know, it was planned between Northcliffe and Lloyd George, when it was recognised that Kitchener was the bar to all progress in speeding up the War; but Northcliffe, as the result of a suggestion of mine, had been staying at G.H.Q. as French's guest not long before, and inevitably feeling at the front credited French with directly inspiring the attack. Actually, French was shocked by the onslaught, and it clouded my relations with him and the members of his entourage for weeks—they could not afford to be seen associating with a *Daily Mail* man.

The modern Press is a powerful ally; but its sword has a double edge.

As a result of our talk at Lady Cunard's, George Moore arranged for me to meet French who was in London for a few days from the front. I went round to their enormous house in Lancaster Gate one evening after dinner and Moore presented me to the Field-Marshal. He made a fine portrait of an English gentleman of the old school, in his dinner-coat and white waistcoat, with his silvery hair and healthy pink cheeks, as he sat at the dinner table over the nuts and port, under a

large and rather indifferent painting of the 'Dash for Kimberley', in the South African War, showing him on horseback, with Haig at his side, sweeping along at the head of the cavalry.

He looked at me hard when we were introduced, a quick, searching look from under his bushy eyebrows, not stern but inquiring; he had a fine old-world courtesy about him, as he made me sit down and ordered coffee and a cigar for me. He went straight to the point. He said he had believed it all along to be a mistake that the war correspondents had not come out: but they were coming out this time. He was in London to see about it, and I was to be one of them.

It did not prove to be as simple as that. Kitchener's little manoeuvre with Millerand complicated matters and for the moment, we had to be content with the three Press tours of the front, already mentioned, which took place early in March. I accompanied the second party which reached G.H.Q. at St. Omer on March 8. Though much occupied with the Neuve Chapelle attack, which was planned to take place on the 10th, two days later, the Field-Marshal found time to receive us and made a nice little speech. As we were leaving Guy Brooke (the late Lord Warwick), who was one of the A.D.C.s, told me the Field-Marshal wanted me to dine that night.

We were only six at dinner. Guy and I drank champagne, the Chief a very diluted whisky and soda, the rest water. Guy warned me against saying that champagne was the customary drink at the C.-in-C.'s table. A visitor from London had dined there one night and had afterwards spread all sorts of stories about the life of luxury they were leading at St. Omer. After dinner French sent for me to his work-room, which led through folding doors out of the dining-room, and we had a general talk about the War. He told me he wanted me to stay on as his guest but thought it would be wiser if I went round with the tour to avoid awkward questions: next week I should come and stay for good.

I had a providential escape of my life on this tour which was as close a shave as any I had when I was at the front as a combatant. George Moore, who was staying with French when

we arrived, had a friend, Lawrence ('Billie') Breese, who, notwithstanding the fact that he was an American, a member of a well-known American family—his sister married Lord Alistair Innes-Ker—held a British commission as a subaltern in the Royal Horse Guards. The story went that, when Billie Breese applied at the War Office for a commission, his American accent was commented upon. 'I'm a Canadian,' Breese lied readily. 'What province?' demanded the official. 'Texas,' said Billie, looking him hard in the eye. He got his commission.

At that stage of the War the shortage of H.E. shrapnel made the destruction of barbed wire defences a serious problem. Breese, who had an engineering turn of mind, remembering that in the Napoleonic wars the British General Congreve's rocket batteries had functioned with great success—notably at the Battle of Leipzig—had constructed a rocket gun, the object of which was to destroy barbed wire from a distance by means of a charge of high explosive attached to a rocket. The Sunday we were at G.H.Q. Breese had invited the various heads of the General Staff to a demonstration of his gun and George Moore and I went along.

Breese's gun was simply the ordinary tripod of the rocket-life-saving apparatus, upon which was laid the projectile, consisting of a rocket separated by a piece of iron called a 'sabot' from a charge of 35 lbs. of blastine in a pear-shaped container of light metal. Installed in a trench and pointed at a mass of barbed wire laid out some 300 to 400 yards away, the gun was fired with a lanyard. Breese would pull the string, with an eerie, piercing shriek the rocket would shoot upward in a high parabola and drop to earth, there would be a few seconds' impressive silence, then an ear-shattering roar and a great spout of earth.

But it was a chancey business. Many of the charges did not explode: Breese, poor, gallant fellow, was a reckless devil, and thought nothing of removing the detonators for use again, once with the aid of the corkscrew in my knife which he borrowed—we were all on tenterhooks. This recklessness was to cost him his life. The light was beginning to fail, the

Generals had gone off to their tea, apart from one or two casual spectators, only George Moore, a young R.E. officer who was helping with the experiments, and I remained. A single projectile was left. All the afternoon I had stood beside Breese in the trench, sometimes pulling the lanyard in his place to speed the rocket on its way. The projectile was in position and Breese had the string in his hand, when George Moore called out casually behind me, 'Oh, Williams, just a minute!'

I turned round. Moore was standing on the high ground in rear of the trench about thirty yards away, talking to the R.E. subaltern. I clambered out of the trench and walked towards him. I had not gone half a dozen yards when my ears were deafened, the ground shook with a terrific explosion. I swung about. Breese and his gun had disappeared. Where they had been a cloud of black smoke mushroomed into the air. I ran forward. I found Breese some yards along the trench where he had been blown, dead, with his head shattered. The explanation given to us afterwards was that he had forgotten to insert the iron 'sabot' separating rocket and charge and, consequently, the rocket on being fired had prematurely detonated the charge.

If George Moore had not spoken an instant before, I should have shared his friend's fate. Standing there, with the reek of high explosive in my nostrils, I felt as though Death had brushed my sleeve in passing. We know that the margin dividing death from life is but a line, but the practical illustration of what an intangible, invisible hair-line it is leaves a sense of helplessness in its wake which is worse than fear. Philip Gibbs, who was with us on the tour and had the room next to mine at the local hotel, told me next morning that I had kept him awake most of the night, shouting in my sleep.

It was the first close call I had had, but it was not the last. One incident in the Battle of the Somme in particular remains in my memory. In the Guards attack on September 15 (1916) we were reorganising after the capture of our first objective. I was forcing my way along a crowded trench and had just reached a breach which the enemy gunfire had made when

one of my sergeants called to me, 'For the love of God, sorr, kape your head down! Jerry has a sniper on that gap!' At the same moment, a young Coldstreamer, coming from behind, jostled past me into the opening and the next instant fell dead at my feet with a bullet through the head.

Death by violence figures prominently in the crime and adventure stories I write. The present vogue of detective fiction has called into being a large and varied gallery of amateur crime investigators. But, as the result of these and other experiences in my life, I have never been able to treat death with the well-known 'light touch'. Especially, I have never had any desire to create the type of amateur sleuth who waxes facetious in its presence.

Human nature really does not regard the spectacle of death as a fitting subject for jest. I have watched the police in more than one country at work over the bodies of murdered people: in the War I lived and ate and slept among the slain. Familiarity with the presence of death may engender a matter-of-fact attitude, but the respect for death is always there. Some day I mean to write a murder story in which the supposed corpse, irritated beyond measure by the wisecracking of the facetious amateur sleuth, ups and cracks the Hon. Marmaduke over the bean, giving him a real corpse to vent his humour on.

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CHAPTER XX

THE FIGHT FOR THE WAR CORRESPONDENTS

MY Neuve Chapelle story, originally intended to be exclusive to the *Daily Mail*, was planned with the deliberate object of bringing to an immediate issue the whole question of the reporting of the War. It was to be written with facilities accorded to me by the Commander-in-Chief, and censored and passed for publication at G.H.Q. – we should see whether Lord Kitchener was still able to exert sufficient pressure on the Cabinet to prevent its publication. It was essential that the story should be non-controversial, a straightforward account of the part played by the units concerned, and although from the confidential reports on the battle I was permitted to read and from statements made to me by the Commander-in-Chief and Sir Douglas Haig, commanding the First Army, I was aware that the shortage of ammunition was largely responsible for the ultimate failure of the attack, I was precluded from using this information or indulging in any criticism of the strategy of the operation. Already the shortage of shells, especially of H.E. shrapnel, was the subject of acrimonious correspondence between G.H.Q. and the War Office and any leading reference to the subject would have given the opposition a convenient excuse for ‘killing’ my dispatch as being a veiled attack on the authorities at home.

My Press tour at an end; I thought it diplomatic to vanish until such time as Sir John French saw fit to redeem his promise to have me as his guest at Headquarters for the purpose of collecting my material. Accordingly, I retired to the Grand Hotel in Paris for a week.

I always had a sentimental attachment for this vast caravanserai situated at the very hub of Paris, with frontages

on the Boulevard des Capucines, the Place de l'Opéra and the rue Scribe. I have no idea when it was opened, but in the years I knew it, before and during the War, its large rooms and high ceilings, combined with a certain bravura of decoration in the way of gilded columns, pink plush and potted palms, were redolent of the atmosphere of the Naughty Nineties – I seem to remember hearing people, as a child, speak of the Grand Hotel as the very latest and most fashionable place to stay. At one time the great winter garden with its glass roof was a courtyard open to the sky, like the courtyard at the old Hotel Cecil in London. I recall it particularly because, on the occasion of my first visit to Paris, I had a curious meeting there with one who was probably the greatest American Negro who ever lived, the late Booker T. Washington, who founded the Tuskegee Institute and did more to raise the moral and material standards of his fellow-black than any man, white or coloured, of his generation.

Cal O'Laughlin, who was afterwards private secretary to President Theodore Roosevelt and now edits the *Army and Navy Journal* in Washington, was working on the Associated Press in Paris. I had known him in London and late one night I dropped in on him at the A.P. office near the Bourse. There was a lot of quiet fun in newspaper circles about this office (it has long since moved to its present location in the Agence Havas building in the same quarter). The great Melville Stone, the General Manager and undisputed overlord of the Associated Press for so many years, was said to have selected it himself; but, in his ignorance of continental ways, he omitted to notice that the premises he engaged adjoined one of the oldest and most notorious of Paris bagnios, an oversight which led on occasion to some disconcerting encounters when Western Senators and similarly unsophisticated persons calling on the A.P. went by mistake into the house next door.

Cal and I were strolling along the Grands Boulevards together when, as we were passing the Grand Hotel entrance beside the Café de la Paix, he darted from my side. In the doorway an elderly Negro, very respectably dressed in black broadcloth, had been buttonholed by one of the night guides

who from time immemorial have always infested this busy corner of Paris. Cal went up to the coloured man. 'It's Mr. Booker Washington, isn't it?' he said. 'No, sir,' replied the other in English. 'My name is Jones.' My companion laughed. 'You can't make me believe that,' he said. Booker T. sighed. 'You newspaper boys get everywhere, don't you?' he said. 'Come on up!'

I don't know what Cytherean pleasures the nighthawk we had seen him talking to had dangled before him, but when we reached the modest bedroom he occupied, he did a curious thing. He took a turn up and down the room in silence, then stopped, stretching his brawny arms and expanding his deep chest like a swimmer emerging from the water. 'I guess a man needs to keep a tight hold over himself in Paris,' he said in his grave voice. Then he drew a volume from his pocket and pitched it on the bed. It was *The Pickwick Papers*. Thereafter, we talked about Dickens.

I am probably the only man alive who has walked from the Grand Hotel to the Porte St. Martin and back in the middle of the night in dressing-gown and pyjamas. I happened to be staying at the Grand on the occasion of the first zeppelin raid on Paris—I think it was in September 1914. At one or two o'clock in the morning the sirens woke me from sleep and slipping on my dressing-gown I went down to find the winter garden full of hotel guests arrayed in the most summary of attires and all in the highest state of alarm. Still in my night attire I went outside to see the fun. Enormous crowds drifted along the boulevards. Searchlights fingered the sky, the archies were banging on all sides, and the firemen, blowing their squeaky little trumpets, were dashing about the streets. I went along with the throng until I found myself at the Porte St. Martin when I turned back. Such was the excitement that night, with all eyes lifted skyward, that nobody seemed to remark my state of déshabille.

But to return to the Neuve Chapelle story—French was as good as his word and by March 26th I was back at St. Omer, with a bed in the A.D.C.'s quarters across the road from the C.-in-C.'s house and my place at the Field-Marshal's mess.

Sir John French started by giving me Sir Douglas Haig's confidential report on the battle to read – it contained severe strictures on General Rawlinson's delay in pressing home the initial advantage, I remember – and told me to go where I liked and see what I liked. One of his own cars would be always at my disposal – it was war corresponding de luxe. As the Neuve Chapelle attack had been delivered by the First Army, my first call was on Sir Douglas Haig and at 10 a.m. next morning the C.-in-C.'s own chauffeur, the imperturbable Sergeant Tubbs, was at the door with a Rolls to drive me to First Army Headquarters at Aire.

Sir Douglas Haig received me in his work-room, furnished in execrable taste, in a shabby château. I should never have recognised him from his photographs which represented him as a handsome, dashing soldier of the 'beau chevalier' type. I found a grave-faced, taciturn man with thinning hair and a large, rather unkempt moustache. I don't think he was at all pleased to see me and was evidently ill at ease throughout our interview. Nevertheless, his reception though reserved was not unfriendly. He asked me not to mention names in anything I wrote, to avoid jealousies. He told me that the non-success of the Neuve Chapelle attempt to break the German line and bring the War into the open again was due in part to the guns newly sent from England which were not effective. He said they could not get enough shells. If they had had all they wanted, they would be going still. Like everybody else at the front, he spoke bitterly about the strikes in England.

Colonel John Charteris, whom I had met in Vienna when, in the guise of a roving *Times* correspondent, he was on his way down to the Danube for M.I. 5 (the Military Intelligence branch at the War Office) to report on the Rumanian cavalry, was in charge of Intelligence under Haig. He gave me letters to the commanders of the various brigades which had taken part in the fighting. These letters were sealed and it was not until I called on 'Pa' Heyworth, the grand old Scots Guardsman who commanded the 20th Brigade and was afterwards killed in action, that I learned what they contained. Old Heyworth read the letter I presented, then pitched

it across the desk to me with a snort. Having sat up until the small hours of the morning reading Sir Douglas Haig's secret findings on the battle, I was much diverted to learn from the letter that I was not to be given any confidential documents whatever, but merely material for what the writer, with a nice command of Fleet Street jargon, described as a 'human interest story'. 'Tush!' said the General – the monosyllable expressive of contempt he used was less conventional – 'you'd better read the Brigade diary. It's confidential, but that's your funeral! There you are!' And he slapped it down in front of me.

For the next three or four days I went from unit to unit – to English line regiments like the Middlesex (The Die Hards) and the Rifle Brigade, Scottish regiments like the Gordon Highlanders and the Scottish Rifles, to the Lahore Division – to the Gharwalis, who covered themselves with glory in the fight and usurped much of the Ghurkas' fame, and the British battalions brigaded with the Indians, like the Leicestershire 'Tigers'. I sought out Tom Olive, my companion of my famous joy-ride to the front with Northcliffe in the previous September,¹ and, after lunching with him and the Third Hussars in a cottage not far from the new Neuve Chapelle line, scaled with him the roof of a half-ruined farm-house and surveyed the trenches to which the Germans had retired. Each evening on returning, dog-tired and usually plastered with mud, to my billet at St. Omer, the first thing I did was to write up my notes, preparatory to welding them into a composite whole.

I should explain that, at my first meeting with French in London, I had suggested putting him in direct touch with Northcliffe. Northcliffe was quite agreeable and at French's request, I brought him to lunch at Lancaster Gate, leaving him and the Field-Marshal alone together. It was really rather amusing to see them as they shook hands, Northcliffe, who at heart was rather shy, concealing his diffidence at being confronted with the Commander-in-Chief behind his most Olympic air, the Field-Marshal, that most simple of men, always suspicious of strangers, especially strangers from the world of politics, eyeing the redoubtable Press Lord with reserve, not to

¹ See p. 227.

say distrust. However, the luncheon passed off satisfactorily. I expect the Irish in French appealed to Northcliffe, who was born at Chapel Izod, outside Dublin; at any rate, 'I like your friend, French,' he told me later. In response to a further suggestion of mine, French invited Northcliffe to visit him at G.H.Q. Actually, the announcement that Northcliffe was on his way to G.H.Q. curtailed my visit: in the circumstances, it was considered unwise to have both of us the Field-Marshal's guests at one time. It was during his visit to G.H.Q. that Northcliffe first obtained a comprehensive idea of the shell shortage and what it portended for the successful prosecution of the War; and it was in consequence of what he heard from French and Haig that he subsequently dispatched Colonel Repington, *The Times* military critic, to the front to fire, in *The Times*, the first shot of the anti-Kitchener campaign.

As it happened, Northcliffe was delayed in coming to G.H.Q.; but I left G.H.Q. just the same and joined him at the Ritz in Paris. There I wrote my story and Northcliffe took it with him when he left for St. Omer the next day, while I returned to London. My dispatch was read and corrected by the Commander-in-Chief in person, with the assistance of General MacDonogh, Director of Military Intelligence at G.H.Q., Lord Curzon, who was staying with French, for the references to the Indian troops, and Northcliffe himself. I still have the MS. and it is not much blue-pencilled, far less, as a matter of fact, than any message I subsequently submitted to the censor when I was permanently installed at G.H.Q. In a letter dated Headquarters, April 9, 1915, the Field-Marshal wrote to me, 'It is *excellent* (his underlining) and exactly what is wanted. You have done the Army a good service.' He went on to explain that one of his excisions was based on the fact that 'we have been accused of wasting artillery ammunition (most unjustly) and they *may* seize upon this remark' and added, 'we have been (also unjustly) accused of shelling over our own men.'

As all newspaper men will understand, a man's duty to his newspaper comes first, and I had intended the story to be a 'scoop' for the *Daily Mail*. But, with a characteristic flash of

insight, Northcliffe realised that, to give the story to the *Mail* alone, would be to jeopardise its intended effect by exciting the jealousy of our competitors and maybe driving them into the opposition camp. I found his arguments unanswerable and told him so. It was therefore decided to circulate the story anonymously, so as to cover up all traces of its Carmelite House origin, through the medium of a small but extremely live organisation, the London News Agency, to newspapers throughout the country.

Having received the story from G.H.Q. marked 'Passed for Publication' with the G.H.Q.'s censor's stamp and the D.M.I.'s signature, Thorp, the head of the London News Agency, submitted it to the London Press Bureau with a note to draw attention to the fact that it had been passed for publication in France. Then the fun started. Sir Edward Cook, the head of the Press Bureau, declined to handle it and sent it to the War Office, who forwarded it to Downing Street. I sometimes look at the original wad of typescript and reflect upon the different hands through which it passed, French's, Curzon's, Kitchener's, Asquith's. It set Whitehall in a turmoil – it must be remembered that, until then, no battle story had appeared, featuring the individual exploits of the troops concerned with all battalions mentioned by name.

Mr. Asquith was gravely concerned. He always had a soft corner in his heart for French and he now wired in person to the Field-Marshal, begging him as a favour not to insist upon publication. But French stood firm. He replied that he had no objection to the story and that publication could do nothing but good. On that, in the morning papers of April 19, the story was published.

It was a triumph. In the House of Commons Mr. Walter Long said, 'I do not believe that anyone who read that story could fail to feel that it would have the most wonderful effect on the people and that this was the kind of account for which we have so long and often asked.' Lord Derby declared, 'I venture to think that the account brought in more recruits than the speech of any Minister or ex-Minister. People like to see described in other than purely official language what

regiments have done.' The newspapers were as enthusiastic in their comments. The *Globe* called it 'Incomparably the finest story of the War' while the *Pall Mall Gazette* said, 'The veil that has been lifted by so brilliant a piece of journalism must not again be allowed to fall between the nation and those who are fighting and dying on its behalf.' J. L. Garvin wrote in the *Observer*, 'The account was not only a document but an event. It will not be forgotten in our generation, and there were touches in it which will live for posterity.'

There was much speculation as to the identity of the writer. The consensus of opinion favoured Colonel Swinton ('Eye Witness') but many people in Fleet Street attributed the story to an Empire or American correspondent. I lay low and said nothing: eventually a paragraph in *Truth* revealed me as the author.

But I have anticipated. Lord Kitchener was still playing his Joffre trump whenever the idea of attaching correspondents permanently to the Army in the field was mooted. So through French's kind offices, Northcliffe sought out an interview with the French Generalissimo in order to knock this nail on the head. I went with him as interpreter, as Joffre spoke no English, and on April 4, 1915, we arrived at the Hôtel du Grand Condé, at Chantilly, where Joffre had his headquarters.

André Tardieu, who was acting as chief liaison officer between Joffre and the French Government, after fighting in the earlier battles of the War with his regiment, the crack Chasseurs à pied, received us. Tardieu and I were old acquaintances. I knew the future Prime Minister of France when he was Foreign Editor of *Le Temps* at its old office next door to the Variétés on the Boulevard des Italiens, one of a joyous band that included such brilliant writers as René Puaux and the late Philippe Millet. An ancient red and blue army képi, souvenir of someone's military service, used to hang on the wall behind Tardieu's chair, and it was the custom in the office to don it when going to interview the then proprietor of the *Temps*, the aged but extremely shrewd Senator Hébrard. When I first went to Paris Jules Cambon gave me a letter to Hébrard. On

my calling to present it, the old gentleman said to me, 'You must be very young.' I replied, 'As a matter of fact, I believe I am the youngest of the English newspaper correspondents in Paris.' The aged Senator dandled his head. '*Hélas,*' he sighed, 'there was a time when I, too, was the youngest.'

Dapper, cynical, self-assured, with a good social background, André Tardieu moved on a different plane from that of the ordinary type of French political journalist. I had the greatest admiration for his brains. He had the French facility for piercing to the heart of a matter, stripping it of its superficialities, and setting out its pith in a few brief and admirably lucid sentences. His writing style was dry but trenchant, and his articles on foreign affairs were read with respect by the leading statesmen of Europe. From the moment of our meeting I never had any doubt that the highest offices in the State were within his grasp; and his failure to play a more leading part in guiding the destinies of France than he has done is a matter of temperament, rather than intellect. Throughout his political career André Tardieu has never been able to bring himself to woo the Chamber of Deputies; but the great political careers in France are achieved only with the goodwill of the rank and file of the Palais Bourbon.

At that time Tardieu could read but not speak English – it was characteristic of him that when appointed French High Commissioner in the United States later in the War he set himself to master the language and now speaks English well – and the very interesting conversation he had with Northcliffe took place through me. I made a full note of it at the time and I think it is worth recording here. For Tardieu was Joffre's alter ego, and his mind the accurate reflection of the Generalissimo's, and vice versâ. The French are nothing if not consistent and, if on no other count, it is interesting to find the same ideas for the establishment of a lasting peace, as outlined to us by Tardieu and Joffre at Chantilly, as early in the War as April 1915, still dominating the French attitude at the Paris Peace Conference nearly four years later.

Northcliffe began by exposing the danger arising from the prevalent ignorance in England about the great rôle which

France was playing in the War and urged vigorous and incessant propaganda as a remedy.

Tardieu explained that, in the opinion of France's military leaders, peace was not possible until the Germans were crushed. But the Germans would not be utterly 'demolished' until the Army Corps on the French front in the West – the flower of the German Army – were smashed. In reply to a question as to the French peace terms, Tardieu said that, as far as the Government was concerned, these had not yet been formulated. But it was the idea of the military authorities that Germany would not make anything like a lasting peace until the Allies stood on her territory and she must therefore be forced to her knees by occupation – that was the preliminary of peace.

If the peace were to be permanent, France must have the left bank of the Rhine, part of the territory in question to be given to Belgium, with bridgeheads on the right bank, and an indemnity with payments spread over, say, a hundred years, so as to secure, if not everlasting peace, at least peace for two or three generations. The spirit of France was the spirit of the Army, and the spirit of the Army was to advance until Germany was crushed. This was the almost unanimous wish of the nation, for the soldiers spread this determination in their letters home, so that the army represented in reality the majority of the French people.

In the various conversations I had had with French, in London and at G.H.Q., I had been impressed – not very favourably, let me say, for, notwithstanding the Marne, my healthy respect for the German Army persisted – by the optimism he displayed. In a talk after dinner, the first night I dined with him at the front, he said that the Germans made their supreme effort at Ypres on October 31st. If we were not yet strong enough to press them back they might yet rise to another great effort, but at present they were three times weaker than they were at Ypres. In another conversation we had at his advanced headquarters at Hazebrouck, during the Neuve Chapelle show, French declared that the Germans were short of ammunition, but expressed the opinion that we must have a decisive military

victory before Germany would sue for peace. He did not think the Allies could do more than get the Germans out of France: before they could get them out of Belgium the War would be over.

That this optimistic attitude was not confined to British G.H.Q. was shown by Tardieu's reply to a request of Northcliffe's at our interview for a summary of the achievement of the French Army to date. The French Army, said Tardieu, had broken the German offensive. It had reduced to exhaustion a machine on which the Germans had worked for forty-four years. The Germans were told that the German Army had not advanced during the past six months because it was necessary to capture Warsaw first; but Warsaw had not been taken. The French Army, after its initial reverses due to unpreparedness, turned about on the Marne, made a stand, then passed from the defensive to the offensive and drove the Germans back from September 5th to September 12th, and the whole operation moved as smoothly as clockwork.

Tardieu then brought the conversation round to the question of the fresh troops the British Government was going to send to France. He stated very definitely that at the recent meeting between Kitchener, French and Joffre at Chantilly, two divisions were not, as had been stated, the maximum Joffre asked for, but were all the British offered. Tardieu textually quoted a note from Kitchener which said, 'We propose to send two more divisions to France, but we expressly stipulate that this does not bind us regarding the ultimate destination of other formations of troops in England.'

With regard to Kitchener Tardieu had the feeling that he was keeping troops back in England, possibly with an eye to some future British expeditionary force – Belgium, Holland, Syria – which he might want to command himself; also that he did not wish to have correspondents with the Army. At the Chantilly conference Kitchener had talked vaguely about all kinds of expeditions, always with the purpose of showing that he had no troops available to send to France. Tardieu complained that Kitchener had justified the dispatch of the 29th Division to the Dardanelles on the grounds that the French had

plenty of troops, as shown by their action in taking a division from their front for the Dardanelles, although Kitchener knew that these were not front-line troops, but made up at a dépôt with Senegalese, etc. There might be some excuse now for all these troops being retained in England in view of possible new developments (invasion of Belgium by the Allies, German violation of Dutch neutrality, Italian intervention), but during the months since October their retention in England was, in the opinion of Chantilly, a serious military error.

What was the situation? The Allied front was (April 1915) 948 kilometres long. Of this

the Belgians held	28 kilometres	
the British	„ 50	„
the French	„ 870	„

The cream of the German Army was in France: here was the front on which the issue of the War would be decided, and all through the winter the British might have held a much greater portion of the front line, thereby releasing French troops for offensive purposes. Like the British Cabinet, the French Government and President Poincaré with them, toyed with a new idea a week for expeditions like the Dardanelles 'hors d'œuvre'. In Tardieu's opinion, the only result of the Dardanelles expedition would be to give Constantinople to Russia, while its first consequences had been the fall of the Allies' friend, Venizelos, and general discontent throughout the Balkans. The French only agreed to take part in the expedition because President Poincaré was 'seduced', and against the better judgment of Chantilly.

That already at this early stage of the War Northcliffe was convinced of the vital importance of propaganda – it was not until three years later that, as Minister of Propaganda, he was enabled to demonstrate his supreme ability in this field – is shown by the fact that various propaganda measures were decided upon between him and Tardieu at this Chantilly meeting, most of which were eventually carried out. They included:

1. A motion picture campaign to show the Allies and neutrals the life of the French soldier in the field (already under way);

2. Tardieu to prepare notes for editorials on what France had accomplished;

3. A halfpenny brochure to be published in English setting forth the same facts;

4. Northcliffe to suggest the names of eight distinguished newspaper writers, four British and four American, to tour the French front, and write, not news, but descriptive articles. These correspondents would be permitted, after an engagement, to visit the scene and write an account of the fighting, after the manner of my *Neuve Chapelle* story.

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At Chantilly Joffre lived the methodical, spartan existence of the French peasant class from which he sprang. By 6.30 every morning he was at his desk and at seven held his first conference with the heads of the General Staff and the chief liaison officer, Tardieu. Lunch was at eleven and the menu never varied. It was fried eggs, a cutlet, gruyère, every day, and the personal staff had to share it. Tardieu, who was a bit of a gourmet, complained to me bitterly about it. He said that the darkest spot on his horizon was the prospect of lunching daily off eggs, cutlets and cheese until the ultimate triumph of the Allies.

After lunch the Generalissimo attended to his correspondence. He took an almost childish delight in the enormous 'fan' mail he received from all over the world, including religious relics and charms, many of them sent by children—he would lock himself in his room to go through the letters. From one to four he always went out, walking or driving, but never riding. He spent most of his time at Chantilly, Tardieu said, but visited the front once a week, to confer with the Generals or inspect troops. He knew nothing about the Press and never received journalists.

The Hôtel du Grand Condé was a big, modern hotel. But Joffre, who had a wide range of magnificent apartments to choose from, had selected the hotel linen-room, on the mezza-

nine, as his study. He received us there, a small and narrow room hung all round with large maps: the former ironing-table, with its white felt top, was the conference table.

The Generalissimo was wearing a loose tunic of horizon blue, without decorations and with nothing but the three gold stars on his sleeve to indicate his full general's rank, scarlet breeches with a broad black stripe, bright yellow, badly made gaiters, and cheap, bright yellow boots. At first glance he made a definitely unmilitary impression: with his big, unwieldy body crammed into that bright, ill-fitting uniform he looked like a cornet-player in an English provincial band. But the head was superb, leonine in its carriage, with a chin like the Rock of Gibraltar. Joffre was a red-haired man who had gone white, with the pallid complexion and light eyelashes that go with that colouring. He was noticeably pale—it looked to me as though he suffered with his heart. Sir John French did not understand the French very well. He detested Lanrézac, who commanded on his right at Mons—a pompous, military pedant he used to call him; but he had the highest opinion of Joffre. Brains always appealed to John French. 'A great commander but much used up by the strain of two years of fighting,' was the way he described Joffre to me, when Joffre gave up the supreme command. Not much happened at our interview with Joffre beyond the recapitulation by Tardieu of our conversation outside, the Generalissimo punctuating the recital by short nods of his enormous head. But he told Northcliffe through me that, not only had he no objection to war correspondents functioning on the British front, but also that he had never voiced any such objection.

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Joffre's statement, followed up by the success of the Neuve Chapelle story, swept the last obstacles away. By May I found myself at the Château of Tatinghem, outside St. Omer, chosen as Press Headquarters, as one of the five correspondents appointed to represent the British Press. Under an arrangement made by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association, each of us daily newspaper men acted for two London morning papers. Mine were the *Daily Mail* and the *Standard* (now defunct).

The rest of the party consisted of John Buchan, now Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada (*Times* and *Daily News*); Philip Gibbs (*Daily Chronicle* and *Daily Telegraph*); the late Percival Phillips (*Daily Express* and *Morning Post*); and, to keep up the family tradition, my brother Douglas, representing Reuter's. The five correspondents who covered the Battle of the Somme received knighthoods afterwards: in addition to Gibbs and Phillips, these were Beach Thomas, my successor for the *Daily Mail* at G.H.Q., Herbert Russell, who took my brother's place for Reuter's, and Perry Robinson, for *The Times*, following John Buchan who went to the Foreign Office in charge of information.

But by that time both Douglas and I were commissioned officers at the front.

CHAPTER XXI

FRENCH AND KITCHENER

H AIG has his statue in London, erected at the public expense, and Jellicoe is to have his, too; but the only memorial to the commander who bore the brunt of the gravest crisis that has confronted our arms in the course of history are modest tablets in Canterbury and Ypres Cathedrals, the tributes of friends.

It is the salvation of Britain that the emergency always produces the man. I was not the blind admirer of French; but I never had any doubt in my mind that his virtues and faults alike made him ideally suited to face, unflinching and undaunted, the disasters which repeatedly threatened the forces under his leadership in the early days of the War. He was resilient, with the gift of eternal youthfulness, so that 'Peter Pan' was his nickname in his family: he was fearless: he had a bull-dog tenacity; and his mental outlook was of the same tough and unbeatable fibre as the troops he commanded. 'Defeat' was not in his dictionary. He believed in his men, without being vainglorious. He was essentially guileless: a subtler nature would have known better how to deal with the intrigues which his subordinates set on foot against him. Although his temperament, like his origin, was Irish, his mind was British in its insularity: a more adaptable character would have been tempted to yield to the pressure brought, not only by the French, but also by the British Government, to prevail upon him to turn at bay before the shelter of the Marne was reached and expose his weary and battle-rent battalions to the risk of destruction.

He had his last-minute orders from the British Cabinet to bear in mind that his was an entirely independent command and not to gamble on a pitched battle his small force,

the bulk of our standing army, behind whose stout shield the nation was arming. Those orders he obeyed. He stuck to them when the Home Government, alarmed by the continual retreat and responding to French pressure, would have overruled him, even to the extent of sending Kitchener to Paris to wear his resistance down. He did not hesitate to match his considered opinion against the panic of Downing Street. He would fight when he was ready, and not before; and history proved him right. The spirit of the little force that barred the road to Ypres, the virgin city, within whose gates no enemy set foot in four years of war, was his spirit. If any man in history had the name of Calais engraved on his heart, as they said of Mary Tudor, it was French.

He had a natural genius for friendship. Men and women alike were drawn to him. He trusted his friends, as he trusted Douglas Haig, who betrayed him, and found no fault in them. But if you were not his friend, you were his enemy; and there was no good in you. In one of his mentalities, his outlook was naturally optimistic; and his estimate of the enemy's resistance was not infrequently falsified by events, although he was not alone in this, as the ridiculous optimism of British G.H.Q. during the Battle of the Somme was to prove. His loyalty to his friends made him lenient where severity might have better served our cause, in the same way as his uncompromising hostility towards some of those who did not see eye to eye with him was apt to blind him to their intrinsic merits. Though an unsavoury intrigue was at the bottom of his recall, it may well be that, by December 1915, his work at the front was accomplished: the War had outgrown the grasp of the leaders of his generation, not of him alone, but also of Joffre and Kitchener.

His moral courage was the equal of his physical courage: in all circumstances, he never failed to speak his mind. He was excessively stubborn: he had his 'naughty' moods and, what with his peppery temper, when he took an idea into his head, it was the hardest thing in the world to talk him out of it. Rank, however exalted, never abashed him: he took people as he found them and expected to be treated in the same way him-

self. He would not kowtow to Kitchener. Kitchener was his senior in rank; but his authority as Secretary of State for War was not greater, in French's contention, than that of any civilian minister who had preceded him in that post. In his refusal to recognise in Kitchener any higher authority than that of Secretary of State for War and his insistence on maintaining his independence as Commander-in-Chief, answerable only to the Cabinet as a whole, I consider that French showed a much sounder knowledge of our democratic form of government than many of his critics among the politicians. Mr. Asquith and other members of the Cabinet might be overawed by Kitchener's military prestige and loth to incur public censure by curbing the popular idol's tendency to gather the whole control of the War into his own hands; but not French.

His sturdiness of character, his bluntness of speech, often reacted to his disadvantage. For example, I have been told that King George V was much offended when, on his first leave in London after the Marne, French omitted to call at the Palace. 'What were you thinking of to neglect such a thing?' Asquith asked him. French's reply was that he was dead tired and home for a rest: he did not think that such formal courtesies were required of him. He is said to have been in hot water again in the same exalted quarter when some tattler took back the story that, on the youthful Prince of Wales's first arrival at G.H.Q., the Commander-in-Chief did not leave an important war conference to greet His Royal Highness at the door. There was no more fervent admirer of our late beloved monarch than the Field-Marshal who, I might mention, cherished a particular devotion for Queen Alexandra, who had been honorary colonel of his old regiment, the 19th Hussars, and was always his staunch friend and partisan, and he had not, of course, the slightest intention of showing any disrespect towards the Royal Family. To anyone acquainted with John French's simple character, and the extent to which the crushing responsibilities of his command absorbed him, such small lapses were intelligible; but a less ingenuous nature would not have made these mistakes.

He was no intriguer. He laid down his command with clean hands. The discovery of the Haig-Robertson alliance that had been instrumental in effecting his removal was a bitter blow. He wrote to Lord Esher, an intimate friend, 'What happened (I have since discovered it all) was due to the lies and treachery of the man whom I had always regarded as one of my best and most intimate friends, and for whom I never said anything but in the utmost praise, although it was not always deserved.'¹ This man, of course, was Haig. But eighteen months after his return from France French was able to speak judicially, if critically, of his successor.

In a talk I had with him at his London house on September 14, 1917, during the Battle of Passchendaele, he said that we were doing no good in France and were not economising men. The Somme casualties were reckoned from six hundred thousand to one million, and he believed we had lost more men in the War than the Germans. He deplored the fact that the Higher Command, right up to last summer, had still clung to the belief that it was possible to break the enemy line, which he now held to be impossible. He was careful to say that he did not criticise Haig, who was a fine fellow, a splendid staff officer, methodical, painstaking, careful in the smallest detail, cautious, magnificent under higher control but singularly unbalanced in some respects and utterly lacking in human sympathy – hard and obdurate, albeit utterly charming if he liked. Haig's chief fault was that he had no power of judging men, but surrounded himself with the wrong sort of subordinates.

94 Lancaster Gate is demolished now. I never pass the corner where that great barrack-like mansion once stood without thinking of the hours innumerable I spent with French there – once, when we sat up late, working at his book, he gave me a bed for the night. In the latter half of 1917, when he was commanding at the Horse Guards and I was on light duty at home after being wounded, he told me he was thinking of replying to criticisms of his conduct of the War by writing his

¹ *French Replies to Haig*, by Major the Hon. E. Gerald French, D.S.O. (Hutchinson, 1936), p. 232.

own story of the British Expeditionary Force and asked me to help him with it. This was the genesis of his book 1914.

The personal diary he had kept in France – he had kept a diary for many years – was the basis of his material, supplemented by the mass of military documents, maps, etc., he had brought back with him. His practice was to dictate to a shorthand writer in his leisure moments and when he had a chapter or two ready to send them to me. In due course, I would go round to Lancaster Gate with my revisions and comments.

The Field-Marshal's literary style was not his strongest point. It smacked of the orderly room, and he had a certain fondness for clichés out of the military text-books. But he had an eye for the dramatic and a certain boyish sense of humour, as well as an excellent memory, and it was my constant endeavour to lighten the narrative by drawing him out about individual incidents in such historic events as the Retreat from Mons, the Battle of the Marne and the defence of the Channel ports. I would say to him, for instance, 'You mention here, Field-Marshal, that you witnessed the disembarkation of the Expeditionary Force. What exactly did you see?' And on that 'The Little Man', as Henry Wilson called him, would start reminiscing while I listened. Still, guided by de Blowitz's advice to my father, I rarely made a note, lest I should interrupt the flow; but on leaving him I would go home and write a page or two of descriptive as nearly as possible in his own words. This I would dovetail into the narrative and, at our next meeting, submit the chapter thus amended for his approval.

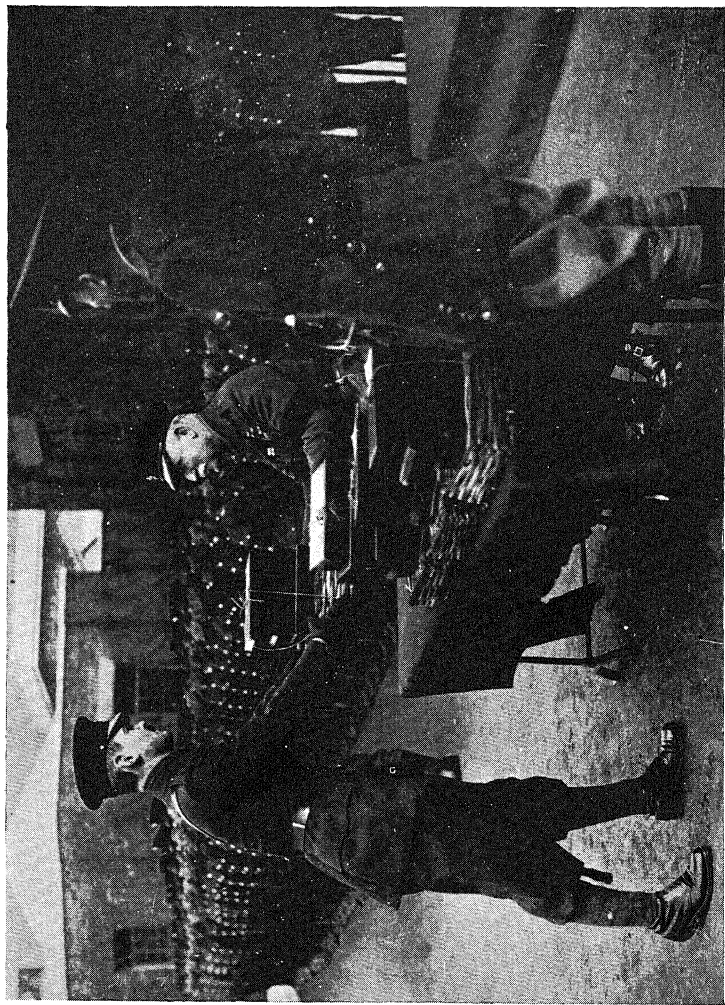
In this fashion, although the facts and conclusions were wholly his, what with the addition of passages descriptive of incident or background, the joining-up of the chapters (rather disjointed as he produced them), and the elucidation of many references to the military and political situation in general, which was indispensable to make them clear to the general reader, I wrote the greater part of the book. I had a lot of map-reading and research to do. The Field-Marshal had a curiously blind eye for the spelling of proper names. For example, to the day of his death he invariably spoke of St. *Omar*, and all through his diary Lanrézac appeared as

Lanzerac: when it came to checking the names of obscure French or Flemish hamlets, set down approximately, or sometimes even phonetically, in the Field-Marshal's diary, I had a rare hunt.

I found him as a rule extraordinarily amenable to my suggestions. He was entirely devoid of the vanity of authorship; but he did not like his criticisms of people to be interfered with when he considered that they deserved to be criticised. I had had a long training in the intricacies of the law of libel, and I regarded it as part of my job to keep 'the little man' out of trouble. Some of his comments, however, were positively actionable, and I did not hesitate to tell him so.

We had some battles royal. The Field-Marshal hated to have his strictures toned down. I can see him now, red as a turkey-cock with indignation, stumping about the study at Lancaster Gate, barking at me. I agreed heartily with many of his opinions and conclusions; but I had the warmest affection for 'the little man' and I was jealous to keep his fame intact. So I stood up to him. He loathed people to argue with him, but I argued with him, not once, but many times. I have often smiled to think what an incongruous spectacle we must have presented—one of the senior Field-M Marshals of the British Army, and Colonel of the Irish Guards, my own regiment, to boot, and the humble subaltern, bickering furiously. Drastic as were my revisions in this respect, they did not go far enough for William Meredith, head of the firm of Constable, which published the book, and he made further elisions and alterations.

The house at Lancaster Gate was filled with souvenirs of the Field-Marshal's long and glorious career. On entering the hall, the first thing to catch the eye was a seventy-seven millimetre German field-gun captured at Loos—French told me it had to be taken to pieces to get it into the house and re-assembled again, a job for fifteen gunners. Another war trophy was the colours of the Königin Elizabeth Garde-Grenadiere (a crack Prussian regiment) found by some French Territorials partly burnt under a heap of empty cartridge cases between St. Gengoulphe and Hautavesnes after the Battle of the Marne.



LORD YPRES, AS COLONEL OF THE IRISH GUARDS, DISTRIBUTING THE SHAMROCK,
ST. PATRICK'S DAY, 1917

As the colours were discovered in the British zone of operations, with a comradely gesture, the French Territorial captain presented them to the British Commander-in-Chief.

French's study was full of treasures. He showed me some of them – an officer's commission under the Consulate, signed by Bonaparte (one of the few authentic signatures), the gift of his great friend, Foch; Nelson's Prayer Before Battle, sent to him by an unknown correspondent, which he always kept on his desk when he was at the front: a gold charm with the elephant of the 19th Hussars set in diamonds, the gift of Queen Alexandra, which he wore all through the Retreat from Mons: a red enamel and gold cigarette-case, with a white enamelled daisy outside, given by King Edward to Lady Warwick ('Daisy') and by her presented to French: an enamelled cross sent him from Russia as a mascot. There was a large collection of caskets presented to the Field-Marshal, containing the freedom of various British cities conferred upon him, while the walls were hung with military studies, mostly Napoleonic, by his elder son, who succeeded him afterwards as Earl of Ypres.

A piece of stout rope which lay on one of the bookshelves had a little story attached to it. At the height of the air raids it was forwarded anonymously through the post to Sir John French at the Horse Guards with a label reading, 'For the Air Board – there are plenty of lamp-posts in Whitehall.' Some time after, in a bragging vein, Lloyd George mentioned to Brinsley FitzGerald that he was continually receiving letters of praise from the public. 'So are we!' said Brinsley, who did not have Richard Brinsley Sheridan as ancestor for nothing, and produced the rope's end with the label.

The Field-Marshal's original intention was to publish his book in two volumes, the first dealing with the military operations up to and including First Ypres, the second continuing the narrative on to Loos and his recall. By the summer of '18 we had virtually finished the second volume when I was appointed Education Officer to the Guards Division and returned to the front. To what extent this circumstance influenced French's decision to confine the period of the work to the operations of the B.E.F. proper, I cannot say. The fact is that the latter part

of the narrative was dropped, and only the volume 1914 appeared. Owing to my absence in France I was precluded from seeing the volume through the press.

It is my lasting regret that I never knew Lord Kitchener. I was a youth in the crowd that acclaimed him in the Mall on his return from the South African War, a splendid figure of a man, and that image was still in my mind when, early in the War, leaving 10 Downing Street after luncheon with the Asquiths, I came face to face with him in the hall. His appearance gave me rather a shock: he looked old and bloated, with suspicious bloodshot eyes that seemed to glow with perpetual anger.

I realise that the picture of him I had obtained at G.H.Q. was distorted – a man with a career like Kitchener's behind him could not be wholly petty-minded. After the War, when I was at Wady Halfa, standing in the very room, in the grounds of the Governor's house, where Kitchener planned the Sudan campaign of 1898, 'Jimmie' Watson, who was A.D.C. with him there at that time, told me this story. Having reached an advanced stage in his plans, Kitchener came to the very reluctant conclusion that he could not carry out his appointed task with the forces at his disposal – he would have to have another British Brigade. But he realised that another Brigade would increase his forces beyond the limit which an officer of his rank was entitled to command, and that any such request would inevitably result in an officer senior to him being appointed so that he would be second, instead of chief in command.

At Kitchener's request Watson drafted the wire requesting the reinforcements. When he asked whether he should send it off, the General said no, he would think the matter over: Watson could go to bed. Soon after daybreak Kitchener brought the telegram to Watson's bed. He was still fully dressed – Watson realised that he had paced the floor all night. Kitchener dropped the message on the counterpane. 'Send it!' he ordered gruffly. Rather than jeopardise the success of the expedition, he had decided to hand over to another the credit for all the preliminary work he had devoted to it. But his

sacrifice was rewarded. He received his extra brigade, but matters were so adjusted that he retained the commander-in-chief.

The late Cheiro, the famous palmist, an Irishman of extraordinary magnetism, once told me that he had seen death by water in Kitchener's hand and had so warned him. Cheiro's statement was made to me long after Lord Kitchener's death in H.M.S. *Hampshire*; but it was subsequently corroborated in striking fashion by a curious story recounted to me by Mrs. Foster, widow of Colonel Foster, of the Royal Engineers, who was C.R.E. to Kitchener, when the latter was Commander-in-Chief in India.

On relinquishing the command in India in 1909, Kitchener was invited to visit Australia and New Zealand and advise on Empire defences. He took a small staff with him, including Colonel Foster and, as a great concession, Mrs. Foster was permitted to accompany the party as the only woman. They were visiting the Dutch East Indies when one morning the small coastal steamer by which they were travelling in the remoter part of the islands ran on a reef. The ship's officers were much alarmed: not only was there a considerable likelihood of the vessel breaking up unless she could be floated off, but the adjacent islands were inhabited by fierce cannibals. While a boat went ashore to examine the situation, the men of the party were advised to arm themselves. It then appeared, as Mrs. Foster told me, that the only one who possessed fire-arms of any kind was Kitchener who produced a revolver of ancient pattern from the bottom of a suitcase. Eventually, the steamer floated off the reef and the alarm passed. Walking on deck with Mrs. Foster that evening as they proceeded on their way, Kitchener began to chaff her about the day's adventure. 'How did you fancy the prospect of becoming the Queen of the Cannibal Islands?' he asked. 'I should have been quite safe,' Mrs. Foster replied promptly. 'I've always understood that cannibals never eat women, because women are tougher than men.' Kitchener laughed, then, growing serious, said, 'You know, I had rather an anxious moment this morning. It has been foretold to me that I shall die by drowning, and I felt sure that the time had arrived.'

Cheiro claimed to have foretold the exact age at death of a number of distinguished people, from King Edward VII down, Kitchener among them – actually, he once predicted to me the age at which I shall die: with how much accuracy, remains to be seen. I have found no convincing evidence in support of his claim in respect of Edward VII and the others, but he was so triumphantly justified in one of his prophecies of a somewhat different character, that the case is worth recalling. In his book, *World Predictions*, published in 1931, he wrote, referring to the future of Edward VIII:

‘It is well within the range of possibility, owing to the peculiar planetary influences to which he is subjected that the Prince of Wales will give up everything, even the chance of being crowned, rather than lose the object of his affections.’

Cheiro died at Hollywood in 1936.

I have had one or two curious experiences with mediums, perhaps the oddest during the War in connection with a robbery of which my wife was the victim. She was living at a ladies’ club in Mayfair while I was down at Warley with my regiment and had deposited her dressing-case containing all her jewellery in the club safe for custody. One morning it was discovered that the safe had been blown open while beside it the night porter lay gagged and bound. There was no clue to the robbery.

A woman friend of my wife’s, who was interested in clairvoyance, persuaded her to let an amateur medium, a woman, whose powers she praised highly, attempt to solve the mystery. An appointment was made at our friend’s apartment in Jermyn Street and my wife took me along. The medium, a pleasant, middle-aged lady, asked to be given some object which the thief might conceivably have handled and my wife handed her one of the empty jewel-cases which had been left behind.

Thereon the medium, tightly clasping the case, proceeded to go into a trance and, speaking in a high, strained voice, told

us that she could see the robbers. They were not in England, but in France: they were wearing Australian uniform and they had buried the jewellery on Clapham Common; she added that my wife would not recover the jewellery. Judge of our astonishment when, a few days later, we read in the evening paper that two Australian soldiers had given themselves up to the British military police at Etaples as authors of the robbery and were being brought over to London to be charged.

My wife and I were at Marlborough Street police court when the prisoners appeared, two Australian privates in the typical slouch hats and blouses. I happened to be seated next to the British A.P.M. who had escorted the accused from France and he told me (*a*) that the precious couple were not Australians at all but professional English cracksmen who had managed to enlist in the Australian forces, (*b*) that at the date of the crime they were in a French military prison, serving a sentence for burglary committed behind the lines and (*c*) that, having escaped from jail and finding themselves unable to get back to England without a pass they had hit upon the idea of confessing to this robbery, preferring an English civilian prison to the more rigorous conditions of a French military one. In due course the A.P.M. went into the witness-box and testified to these facts, on which the prisoners were handed back to the military authority to be returned to France to finish their sentence.

In the upshot the night porter of the club, who had a long criminal record, was charged with the burglary and sentenced at the Old Bailey. Apparently, our medium did not foresee this development, although she was right in predicting that none of the stolen property would be recovered. What she did unquestionably discern, however, was the intrusion of the two *soi-disant* Australian soldiers into the case: seemingly she was able to read part, but not all, of the future, and her conscious mind, that is to say, her imagination, had filled in the gaps which her subconscious mind had left.

The experience seems to me to be a good example of the difficulties which the whole question of second sight presents to any attempt to place it upon the basis of an exact science.

CHAPTER XXII

ALICE IN WONDERLAND. THE PRESS AT THE FRONT

WHEN, after the long and arduous battle waged for our admission, we, the first five war correspondents officially accredited to British G.H.Q., reported at St. Omer in May 1915, we found ourselves in a completely Alice-in-Wonderland situation. To begin with, officially speaking, nobody wanted anything to do with us. No official connection existed between Press Headquarters and the information services of the General Staff: there was no existing organisation to make use of us for propaganda purposes, either to nail a lie to the counter swiftly, or to deceive the enemy. Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, would have none of us – ‘Let me alone,’ he growled, when approached on the subject. ‘I’m here to kill Germans!’; and in the circumstances, it was not surprising that his subordinate, the Director of Military Intelligence, our hierarchical chief, should have felt little desire to risk blotting his copybook by espousing our cause. As for the Chief Press Officer, our immediate chief, he was a well-meaning but uninfluential Major of the Indian Army, whose principal concern, not unnaturally, was to hold his job and not imperil his chances of promotion by falling foul of the bigwigs at G.H.Q.

Added to this, the censorship rules already referred to¹ (‘Regulations for Press Correspondents accompanying a force in the field’), if enforced, would have made it virtually impossible for us to have written anything about the War which, seeing that the Army was charging the newspapers for our keep, was scarcely a practical state of affairs from the point of

¹ See p. 271.

view of Fleet Street. Under these regulations the following matters, 'unless officially communicated for publication', were not to be mentioned:

- Strength, composition and location of forces
- Movement of troops and operations
- State of supply and transport
- Casualties
- Important orders
- Criticisms and eulogies of a personal nature
- Morale of troops.

The Press Officers, of whom, including the Chief Press Officer, there were four, were all alike in their abyssmal ignorance of everything appertaining to newspapers. None, excepting the Major, were regular officers; none possessed the least influence in the close corporation known as G.H.Q. For myself I have never understood by what process of reasoning one of the most potentially important posts at the front should have been entrusted to a Major of Pathans, assisted by a couple of Indian Civil Service men—one of whom was that grand person, the late Colonel (then Captain) J. C. Faunthorpe, the big game hunter—and an English county cricketer. Of course, the truth is, there was no reasoning about it. The old British Army was conducted on the self-seeking plan. But as there was no one big enough to run the Press for his own ends, so there was no one in the lower commissioned ranks of the Regular Army rash enough to be willing to incur the suspicion that he was running it in favour of his particular patron, with the result that the Press was one of those odd services, like carrier pigeons or gas, into which people drifted, goodness knows how or why.

Had it not been for the fact that, with the exception of my brother, whose first important assignment it was, the five war correspondents were writers of mature experience, the situation as between Press and Army would have become impossible in the first week. Our mentors did what they could; but we actually acted to a large extent as our own censors. We knew what we could safely write, and for a time, the famous

'Regulations' were ignored, and all went comparatively smoothly, especially as there were no major operations on the British front that summer. A disturbing feature was the fact that we were banned, by a special order of Douglas Haig's, from the First Army area. The reason alleged was that Colonel Repington, *The Times* military critic, while on a visit to French, had given away in print the fact that there was an artillery observation post on the tower of La Couture Church, with the result that the tower had been shelled, with consequent casualties. By this time, French, with Northcliffe's connivance, was using Repington to expose the plight of the Army denuded of an adequate supply of shells; but Haig—maybe, with an eye to his future—was more cautious. He had received me at French's request, but he declined to see Repington, alleging that neither he nor his Staff had authority to see newspaper correspondents, notwithstanding the fact that Repington was accompanied by Lord Brooke, one of French's chief personal Staff officers. In the upshot Haig excluded us from his area, with the result that the Second Army received such publicity as we were suffered to give it, the First Army none.

Major Stuart, the Chief Press Officer, was a gallant fellow who, as soon as he could rid himself of a hopeless and thankless job, applied for a Brigade and gave his life for his country. But I could not help remembering that, in the South African War, an experienced man of the world like Lord Derby had been Chief Field Censor and it irked me, as it irked the others, to be school-mastered by people, otherwise estimable, of the professional inexperience, as far as Fleet Street was concerned, of Major Stuart and his aides.

We were suffered to visit the front line trenches, though only in the Second Army zone, and Stuart and his assistants were helpful enough in arranging, and escorting us on, such visits. But the General Staff did absolutely nothing to facilitate our task—even the modest request that the daily intelligence summary, familiarly known to the troops as *Comic Cuts*, might be communicated to us, was for long refused: such explanations of the military situation as Stuart vouchsafed

to us he was obliged to scratch up, as and how he could; and the Staff never even took us into its confidence to the extent of warning us in advance, so that we might have the opportunity of witnessing an attack, however small. Although our Press Château was only a mile or two outside St. Omer, we were virtually isolated. It soon became clear to me that the situation was impossible, that I, for one, was wasting my time.

So I wrote to French and told him so. Action swiftly followed. At breakfast a day or two later Major Stuart informed us in some distress that he had been superseded, that Major the Hon. Frederick Guest was coming to take his place. In the course of the morning, the new Chief Press Officer arrived and was introduced all round. I felt much cheered. Freddie Guest was only a Staff Major, the same as Stuart, but, as A.D.C. and personal friend of French, and brother to the Viceroy of Ireland, his influence at G.H.Q. was immeasurably greater: I felt that with Guest something could be achieved.

But I was counting my chickens before they were hatched. I understand there is a system in India known as 'The Simla system'. In brief, it consists in making yourself solid with the man above you, so as to short-circuit all complaints that come up from below. Stuart was a product of the Simla system and he beat me hands down. The next thing we knew Guest was out and Stuart was in again. I heard afterwards that Robertson, the Chief of Staff, had sent for Guest and informed him that he, Guest, might be the new Press Officer but that if he took on the job, he would have him, Robertson, against him. That was enough for Freddie. He climbed down and I was left nursing the infant.

Soon after this followed Northcliffe's attack on Kitchener in the *Daily Mail* and my threads with the Commander-in-Chief were temporarily severed. It seemed to me only a matter of time before my period of usefulness at G.H.Q. would be finished. The treatment meted out to the correspondents over the Battle of Loos settled matters for me.

That a big attack was fixed for the latter end of September was an open secret at the Press Château. Permission was curtly refused to our request that we might be conducted to a

previously designated spot and witness the opening of the battle, although we were given a preliminary survey of the ground, without, however, being told that it was to be the scene of the attack. The morning of the battle, we were pitilessly confined to our quarters. However, as soon as it became apparent that the first advance was successful, we were given plenty of news and we were able to forward long and comparatively uncensored messages home. When at length we were given leave, on the third day of the battle, to go up to the front to witness the attack of the Guards Division, we were so far back that we saw no more than a line of smoke on the horizon and, though we collected abundant material from different sources, without warning the censorship came down like an axe and chopped our dispatches to meaningless 'pie'. This did not prevent the English newspapers from publishing detailed stories of the fighting gleaned from the wounded as they arrived from France including accounts of the first use of gas by the British, which we had been expressly forbidden to mention.

Major Stuart had now been replaced by an officer who achieved the honour of a question in Parliament and an imperishable place in the annals of military censorship by his feat in removing from John Buchan's dispatch to *The Times*, quoting Kipling's well-known line, 'The captains and the kings depart,' the allusion to 'the kings', on the ground that no 'kings were present on the occasion referred to'. The tragic frustration of our efforts to be of service to the Army and to recruiting at home was turning to farce: I applied for leave and in early October went home to London. There, on October 11, I addressed a long memorandum to Lord Selborne, the one member of the Cabinet who had been battling against the stupidities of the Censorship, setting forth our grievances and my idea of a remedy. Selborne replied to me, 'The matters you raise in your letter and your memorandum are of the greatest importance. I will see what I can do, but I am not hopeful.'

A day or two later Repington wired me from G.H.Q. implying that a great change had come over the face of things as far as the correspondents were concerned, and begging me to return. I went back. Many promises were made; but actually

the first real improvement did not manifest itself until the following July when, on the occasion of the opening of the Somme battle, the war correspondents then stationed at British G.H.Q. were finally able to reap the benefit of our long and arduous struggle and were afforded ample facilities for seeing and reporting everything. In particular, a concession which I had strongly advocated in my representations to the Commander-in-Chief and in my memo. to Selborne was at length granted – the correspondents were advised in advance of the forthcoming attack and were conducted on the previous night to a vantage point from which to view the battle when it opened.

But I had had enough. I was weary of the chicane and pusillanimity, the stupidity and self-interest, I had met with at G.H.Q. and sick of struggling against the dead, non-creative hand of an unenlightened and unimaginative censorship.

By December I had my commission in the Irish Guards.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE IRISH GUARDS

NONE but those who fought in the War can ever realise how much richer life became by reason of the emotional and spiritual influences of the experience. To face death is a long step towards learning to face life. We know that life is a leasehold, not a freehold, but the realisation comes all too often only when the ground landlord calls. It takes the man who has looked death in the face in battle to understand the vein in which the pagan poet wrote, 'Death plucks my ear and says, "Live! I am coming."'

When the whistles blew at zero hour the soldier perceived that, in the eyes of Death, all men are equal. It was Death, the only true democrat, who taught the comradeship of the front line. As out of all evil some good comes, so it was that comradeship which saved England after war. It steered us clear of revolution; it steadied us down the steep slope of depression and supported us up the long, hard road to recovery.

The community of spirit in the Army in France was extraordinary. One had the feeling that every branch of activity in our far-flung Empire had emptied itself there. Looking back, it seems to me that I met at the front in khaki almost everybody I had ever known or ever heard of. It was the old home reunion, the great Empire family party. Long before the insuperable difficulties in which the war correspondents worked at G.H.Q. decided me, a certain intuitive sense which had come to my aid before was whispering to me that I had to be in this, that if I let the opportunity slip I should regret it to the end of my days.

It meant loss of advancement and a very considerable reduc-

tion of income, as it meant in the case of thousands of other fellows; and I did not conceal from myself the fact that as an experienced newspaper man I was probably of greater value to the Army than I should be as a wholly untrained combatant officer. My qualifications probably fitted me better for the Intelligence Corps; but I had had a bellyful of the Staff and all its ways. I was young and vigorous and men were needed, so I gave the Staff a miss: I wanted to see this thing at close quarters. I have made plenty of mistakes in my life but this was not one of them.

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A young man I knew wrote to that distinguished veteran, the late Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, at the beginning of the War, asking the latter to help him obtain a commission in one of the Guards regiments. He received a reply stating that the Field-Marshal could not recommend any candidate for a commission in the Brigade of Guards who was not in possession of a private income of at least a thousand pounds a year. Of course, if such a mid-Victorian point of view had proved general, the Brigade of Guards would have ceased to exist for lack of officers before the first year of the War was at an end. Fortunately, a more up-to-date conception of the realities of the situation prevailed and from the very start Guards opened their ranks to admit large numbers of officers from the Special Reserve whose only qualifications were that they were of honourable standing and socially not too un-presentable.

An actor friend of mine who was accepted for one of the Guards regiments, in the very early days of the War, has a good story about his first interview after receiving his commission which may or may not be apocryphal. On reporting for duty at the orderly-room with a number of other newly-joined officers he was asked to state his profession. Not knowing quite how it would be taken if he admitted that he was on the stage, he said he had no profession. 'Come,' said the adjutant, 'you must do something. We only want to know so as to make the best use of your services.' On this my friend confessed that he was an actor. 'Good,' said the adjutant and, turning to the

assistant-adjutant at his side, remarked, 'We'll put him in No. 2. Company.' And turning to the applicant again, he explained engagingly, 'We've a juggler in No. 2 Company.'

The late Gerald du Maurier who, towards the end of the War was in the Household Brigade Cadet Battalion at Bushey, founded to train officers for the Brigade of Guards, had some amusing stories to tell of his experiences. One of the warrant officers was a man of such uncompromising ugliness that Gerald could not take his eyes off him on parade. The sergeant-major perceived it and every time he passed him, snapped, 'Cadet doo Maurier, look to your front!' Nevertheless, Gerald could not restrain his glance until finally the sergeant-major stopped in front of him and, thrusting his face into Gerald's, exclaimed wrathfully, 'Ow many more times am I to tell you to look to your front? 'Oo d'you think I am? Gladys Cooper?'

But once Gerald got his own back. Sir Henry Wilson was coming to inspect the Cadet Battalion and in announcing the visit to the company assembled in one of the classrooms, the company commander, anxious to parade the company celebrity before the General, said to Gerald, 'Cadet du Maurier, you come up and sit in the front row!' 'Shall I put my make-up on, sir?' Gerald inquired delicately.

The Reserve Battalion of the Irish Guards was stationed throughout the War at Warley Barracks, Brentwood. Erected by the East India Company somewhere in the turn of the century as acclimatisation barracks for 'John Company' troops returning from India, they had been repeatedly condemned. The most rudimentary comforts of life were lacking. There was no electric-light in the sleeping quarters, no hot water laid on, no bathrooms; and for officers and men alike, the accommodation was equally overcrowded and uncomfortable. Officers slept three and four in a room, sharing one hip bath and one mirror; to tub and shave by candlelight in the dark winter mornings and to be on parade at 7.30 was a rare scramble. We were looked after by the weirdest collection of batmen, old soldiers who after a life spent in the Army were still employed in odd jobs about the barracks. One or two of them died, prac-

tically from old age, while I was at Warley, including a kindly old chap with a hump, who was familiarly known as 'Hill 60'.

Joining the Irish Guards was like going back to school for me. Like every other newly-joined officer, even if he were a regular of long standing transferring from the cavalry or Line, I had to learn my squad drill on the square. There is only one way of doing things in the Guards, and that is the Guards way. It is a long jump from the free-and-easy existence of Fleet Street to the strict discipline and manners and customs, unalterable as laws of Mede and Persian, of the Brigade. The unsnobbish, happy family spirit of the Irish Guards went far towards helping me to clear it.

The Irish Guards had a decidedly literary flavour – vicariously, that is. It numbered among its officers John Kipling, Rudyard Kipling's only son, reported missing, and presumably killed at Loos, before I joined: Marion Crawford, son of the American novelist, one of the best-looking fellows I ever saw – I had known him in Paris before the War – who lost his life in a bombing accident at the front: Francis Synge, nephew of the author of *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Well of the Saints*, killed in action; and Hannay, son of the distinguished cleric affectionately known to all lovers of light-hearted fiction as George Birmingham. There was also the gallant Vyvyan Harmsworth – 'Hermie', as we used to call him – Lord Rothermere's son and heir and Lord Northcliffe's nephew who, after being wounded once, contrived in the face of much family opposition to return to the front in the supposedly sheltered position of an A.D.C. Once back in France, however, he did not rest until he rejoined his regiment, went into action with them at Bourlon Wood and died of wounds received there.

From the first I felt myself at home with the Irish Guards. The men were for the most part the Irish peasants among whom so many happy days of my childhood had been spent. Their smart bearing and big frames, their unconscious sense of humour, their fearlessness and devotion under fire, their religious faith, with scapulars under the tunic and rosary in the pack, their occasional contrariness – all these things were

continually touching reminiscent chords in my mind. There were one or two Americans among them – when I came upon one of them reading the *Saturday Evening Post* in the barrack-room he admitted his nationality; and an ex-naval rating who had served with the French Foreign Legion and wore the medals of several North African campaigns. We also had an authentic baronet in the ranks – but this was at the front – a woebegone old Irishman, to whom the title had somehow descended, servant to Hickey, our famous quartermaster who went through the whole War with the Irish Guards, from Mons to the Rhine.

If, as the radio experts say, no sound ever dies in space, what billows of laughter must still reverberate about Warley's graceless brown brick! We laughed a lot at Warley. 'Irish bulls' were the order of the day. Once I heard a sergeant, with face as solemn as a judge, roar irately at his platoon, 'Faith, an' ye'll all be fallin' asleep, if ye don't wake up prisintly!' I recall the delight with which it was discovered that we had a Jew in the ranks of the battalion which usually mustered about ninety per cent Roman Catholic and the remainder Church of Ireland. It was at a time when the newspapers were full of the Jewish regiment which Colonel Patterson was raising to take part in Allenby's march on Jerusalem that a certain Private Phillips appeared at Commanding Officer's Orders and begged, in the manner prescribed, for 'leave to speak to the Commanding Officer'. A dark, grave-looking man of mature age, he explained in a Dublin accent you could cut with a knife that he wished to transfer to another regiment. 'But aren't you contented here? On what grounds do you wish to leave?' Lord Kerry, the commanding officer, inquired.

'On th' graounds uv bein' th' onuly Jew in th'Oirish Guar-rds!' declared Private Phillips with feeling.

It then transpired that he was a Dublin wardrobe dealer who had joined up under the Derby scheme and wished to enrol himself with his other co-religionists in Colonel Patterson's corps.

His request was granted.

The summer of 1916 found me back at the front – this time



THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, 1916
(by permission of Imperial War Museum)

as an 'ensign' or Second Lieutenant in the Irish Guards. I was wounded at the Battle of the Somme in September. Following a long convalescence in England and Scotland, I was due to return overseas when I injured myself digging trenches at Warley and had to go to Milbank for an operation. In this way I missed Passchendaele and was not passed fit for active service until the following summer (1918). As there was no vacancy with our two battalions in the field at the time I got myself appointed Education Officer to the Guards Division in the newly-formed Army Education Corps. The attack on the Hindenburg Line was in full swing when I reported at Divisional Headquarters in August at a sinister cross-roads with the even more sinister name of 'Le Mort Homme' and, as Army education seemed to be temporarily in the discard, I contrived to get taken on as 'learner' on the Guards Divisional Staff and had some breezy times acting as liaison officer between Divisional H.Q. and the front line Brigades.

On one such occasion, I was wounded (for the second time) in rather odd circumstances. The 3rd Guards Brigade, commanded by the late General Heywood, a magnificent Staff officer – his premature death a few years ago cut short a career of brilliant promise – was due to attack and I was lent to Brigade Headquarters as a galloper. After a day's hard fighting I found myself as duty officer for the night at Brigade H.Q., installed in a miserable cottage, marking up by candlelight the positions which the Brigade had reached, as the reports came over the field telephone, on the Brigadier's own map. It was a very large scale map and the General treasured it tenderly – it was one he had 'scrounged' at Army H.Q. There were two beds in the tiny room where I kept my watch, on which the General, 'Tiny' Buchanan, his Brigade Major, and Arthur Penn, the Staff Captain, all in their clothes, had composed themselves for sleep, the General on one bed, 'Tiny' and Arthur on the other.

There was a certain amount of shelling going on and a British six-inch battery was banging away close by. I was working at a table placed between two windows under a heavy gilt mirror. Whether the enemy put a shell down outside or

whether our battery was the cause, suddenly the mirror, together with part of the wall and ceiling, without warning crashed down on my head.

For the moment I was stunned. As I gathered myself up, with the blood running down my face and hands and my hair full of glass, I heard the General exclaim sharply, 'What's that?' and 'Tiny's' sleepy reply 'I think it was a shell, sir!' 'Are you all right, Valentine?' the Brigadier inquired solicitously. 'I think so, sir,' I answered. 'I'm only bleeding a bit.' 'Don't bleed on my map!' said Heywood.

We often laughed at this story together after the War.

Early in 1915 some satirical verses at the expense of the Staff were circulating from hand to hand at the front. They were written by the late Julian Grenfell, Lord Desborough's second son, author of the fine war poem, 'Into Action', who was later killed at Ypres, and as I have not seen them in print before, with Lord Desborough's permission, I reproduce them here:

PRAYER BEFORE BATTLE

Fighting in mud we turn to Thee in these dread days of battle, Lord,
To keep us safe, if so may be, from shrapnel, sniper, shell and sword.
But not on us, for we are men of meaner clay, who fight in clay,
But on the Staff, the Upper Ten, depends the issue of the day.

The Staff is working with its brains while we are fighting in a trench,
The Staff the Universe ordains, subject to Thee and General French,
God keep the Staff, especially the young ones, many of them sprung
From our aristocracy, their lot is hard, they are so young!

O God, who mad'st all things to be, and mad'st some things exceeding
good,
Please keep the Extra A.D.C. from horrid scenes and sight of blood!
See that his eggs are freshly laid, not tinged, as some of ours, with
green,
And let no nasty draught invade the windows of his limousine!

When he forgets to buy the bread, when there are no more minerals,
Preserve his smoothly well-oil'd head from wrath of costive generals!
O God, who mad'st all things to be and hatest nothing Thou hast
made,
Please keep the Extra A.D.C. out of the sun and in the shade!

AMEN.

The Scots Guards had a song in France which throws an amusing light on the private soldier's estimate of the relative merits of the successive grades of the military hierarchy, set forth with delicate irony. It went to a good, lilting tune and the 'Jocks', as they are called in the Brigade, used to sing it with tremendous gusto on the march. Here it is, set down as I remember it:

'Has anyone seen the section commander?

I know where he is,

I know where he is,

I know where he is.

Has anyone seen the section commander?

I know where he is,

He's drinking up the section's rum.

I've seen him,

I've seen him,

Drinking up the section's rum, I've seen him,

Drinking up the section's rum.

Has anyone seen the platoon commander?

I know where he is, etc.

He's sitting in the deep dug-out,

Etc.

Has anyone seen the company commander?

I know where he is, etc.

He's cheering up the chaps at dawn,

Etc.

Has anyone seen the commanding officer?

I know where he is, etc.

He's advancing by leaps and bounds,

Etc.

Has anyone seen the brigade commander?

I know where he is, etc.

He's ticking off the 1st Scots Guards,

Etc.

Has anyone seen the divisional commander?

I know where he is, etc.

He's sitting in his new "chatou",

Etc.

Has anyone seen the corps commander?
I know where he is, etc.
He's dipping in the deep blue sea.
I've seen him,
I've seen him,
Dipping in the deep blue sea, I've seen him
Dipping in the deep blue sea!

The Staff in France was the butt of many jests. Of these perhaps the most famous was the story of the two Staff officers who on a winter night of sleet and icy rain sat over dinner in their luxurious 'chatou'. One said with a shiver, 'My goodness, I feel sorry for those poor devils in the trenches in weather like this!' To which his companion retorted, 'They have their ground sheets, haven't they? Pass the port!'

But the cleavage between front line and Staff had its serious side. The antithesis existed in all armies in the War. The Germans stamped on it hard, but in the British Army – at any rate, in the beginning it flourished almost unchecked, with deplorable results. Particularly in the Guards, with their strong esprit de corps. The Guards officer who, when war broke out, stuck to the Staff job for which he had been specially trained, was all too likely to find his regimental comrades lumping him in general condemnation with the most unblushing skrimshankers of the extra A.D.C. and Base services order. With the majority of Guardsmen who were away from their regiments on mobilisation, the wish was instinctive to go on front line service with the rest and in this way many lives were thrown away which would have been preserved with greater usefulness for the Staff work of the Army.

One of the most lamentable cases was that of that fine Staff officer, Colonel George Morris, who was killed in a vague skirmish at Villers Cotterets in September 1914 when in command of the 1st Battalion Irish Guards. A similarly typical instance was that of another Irish Guardsman, General Charles FitzClarence, V.C., whose determination and vision literally saved the British Empire at Ypres, and who was killed by a stray bullet while guiding his old battalion of Irish

Guards into position for a night attack in the closing stages of the battle.

It was Charles FitzClarence, commanding the 1st Guards Brigade in the First Division, who on October 31, 1914, when the Germans broke through the First Division front at Gheluvelt, threw in the 2nd Battalion Worcesters to recapture the village and restore the line, thereby barring the road to the sea. It was a moment of acute peril because the First Division had no reserves and there was nothing between the Germans and the coast. The Worcesters were not under FitzClarence's orders or even in his Division, but reserve to the Second: however, when FitzClarence had explained the situation to Major Hankey, the Worcesters' commanding officer, the latter agreed to order the attack on the village, a course of action for which, properly speaking, neither he nor FitzClarence had any authority.

FitzClarence was killed a week or so later and for many months it could not be discovered who had given the order to the Worcesters that saved the day. From information furnished by French I was the first to reveal FitzClarence's part in the events of October 31 at Ypres, and later I embodied a series of depositions by members of his staff and others, clearly establishing him as the author of the order, in an article in *Blackwoods*, 'Gheluvelt, 1914. The Turning of the Tide', under the pseudonym of 'Vedette'.

As a matter of historical interest I might mention that one of the German regiments responsible for the capture of Gheluvelt was the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry commanded by Colonel List who was killed on that occasion. It was a Munich regiment composed mainly of volunteers. One of these was Private Adolf Hitler.

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CHAPTER XXIV

‘THE MAN WITH THE CLUBFOOT’

ON September 25, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, a shell landed beside me and blew me skyhigh. I went up an experienced newspaper man, and came down a budding novelist.

It happened in this wise. On this day two Brigades of Guards attacked, the 1st and 3rd. The 1st Battalion Irish Guards led the attack of the 1st Guards Brigade and I went with the leading company. Having successfully achieved our objective, which was the capture of the village of Les Bœufs, we proceeded to dig in on the outskirts of the village and I sat down for a minute on the edge of a shell-hole to rest from my labours. It was a warm September afternoon and I removed my tin hat, as did Walter Mumford, a brother officer, who was with me. Suddenly a shell landed between us. It was a 6-inch shell and, owing to a misreading of the position we had reached on the map, it was a British one, which may account for the fact that it failed to explode. But its draught was sufficient to propel me skyward and, as I learned subsequently, though my companion was uninjured, to cover him so thoroughly with earth that he had to be dug out with spades.

Strangely enough, I have a distinct recollection of soaring aloft. Ten days before, I had gone through with my Battalion the great attack of the Guards Division, in which I had one orderly wounded and another killed at my side, a bullet through the heel of my boot and another through the strap of my field-glasses, besides being twice knocked over by shell-bursts. I suppose I felt that my luck could not last—at any rate, I remember thinking, as the ground fell from under me, ‘This is the end.’ The next thing I knew I found myself star-

ing at a small patch of blue sky. A big Irish Guardsman with an entrenching tool crouched beside me. 'Who are you?' I said, still dazed. The Guardsman looked rather sorry for himself. 'Sure and amn't I the feller as bruk your fall, sorr?' he declared ruefully. I then realised that I had tumbled into a shell-hole which my companion had been engaged in deepening: I also discovered that blood was running down my neck and that most of the equipment I carried on my belt – signalling lamp, compass, etc. – had been blown into the back of my head.

Well, that 'argument with a shell', as the men used to call it, took me home with gunshot wounds and shell-shock. Shell-shock is the result of the wearing down of the normal nervous resistance beyond nature's ordinary guards. I have seen men suddenly smitten with shell-shock after a spell of sharp bombardment, led, sobbing and shrieking, like people possessed of the devil in the Middle Ages, from the trenches. I was not in as bad a pass as that, but the reaction came when I found myself installed in the Empire Hospital, Vincent Square, tenderly looked after by Miss Macintosh, the matron, and her bevy of beautiful nurses – very sensibly, I have always thought, Miss Macintosh insisted that her nurses should be good-looking, on the grounds that it helped on recovery.

My head wounds were superficial, but I was bruised all down the back. The battle dreams, however, were the worst. Every night I would dream of corpses, mounds of them, with waxen hands and faces, or I would fancy myself alone in a trench with towering walls and giant shells, round like the cannon-balls of Waterloo, raining down upon me. I could see them approaching through the air, a recollection, this, of the German 'minnies' which were visible to the naked eye as they came hurtling over with a strange gurgling sound to explode with an awe-inspiring roar. In another battle dream that visited me more than once, I would find myself in Berlin, a British spy without papers, pursued hotly by all the forces of military and police, whose efficiency I knew so well. From such nightly horrors I would awake bathed in perspiration and screaming with fright. There were other screams besides mine along the corridors – it

must have been a terrible experience for the charming girls who tended us so sweetly and so patiently.

Once – I remember the day because Mrs. Asquith came to visit me and they would not let her see me – I awoke from an afternoon nap with the conviction that the man in the next room had died. It seemed to me that the odour of death was in my nostrils and a bell that tolled somewhere outside in Vincent Square added to the illusion. In a panic I rang for my nurse and when she came, clung to her in terror. The doctors were fetched – ‘Geordie’ Riddoch, the little Scotsman with the brilliant mind and soothing, sympathetic manner: Henry Head, the famous brain specialist, bearded and genial – but I would not be soothed. To this day I don’t know whether the whole thing was shell-shock or fact.

These nightmares of the battlefield followed me up to Scotland where a great-hearted Royal lady, Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, lent my wife and me a shooting-box on the Gare Loch for my convalescence. Rhu Lodge was on a neck of land running into the loch opposite Rosneath, the Argyll demesne, and, by her Royal Highness’s instructions, the Rosneath factor, a grand type of Lowland Scot, did everything to make us comfortable. It was a charming house, all on one floor, with windows commanding views of the loch and the gardens where the roses bloomed until Christmas – among the sea birds and the flowers, gradually my battle dreams became less frequent and I found peace.

The doctors’ orders were stringent. No violent exercise, no excitement, no late hours. Already at that time I knew something of psycho-analysis. When in Vienna in 1912, at a time when Freud was virtually unknown outside the German-speaking countries, I had read his first two books, *Psycho-Analyse* and *Zur Deutung der Träume* and was so impressed that I had made sundry efforts, interrupted by my frequent trips abroad, to interest a London publisher in them, but without success. Now, with Freud’s theories in mind, to give myself something to do, but also to rid my mind of the battlefield impressions which still imprisoned it, I sat down and wrote ‘The Adventures of an Ensign’ for *Blackwoods*.



ZEPPELIN BROUGHT DOWN AT BILLERICAY, 1916

I might mention that the MS. was weeks travelling to and fro between the various quarters claiming prescriptive rights of censorship – the Press Bureau, the War Office, Regimental Headquarters, my immediate military chiefs at the front as at home. Finally, it landed at the Headquarters of the London District and would be there to this day, I imagine, if someone had not told me that John Buchan, then Director of Information at the Foreign Office, was reading MSS. sent in for censorship by 'Frankie' Lloyd (Major-General Sir Francis Lloyd, commanding the London District, including the Brigade of Guards). A telephone-call to Buchan and next day I had the MS. back, passed unaltered – a good turn if ever there was one.

Meanwhile, apart from a small grant which the *Daily Mail* generously allowed me throughout my period of military service and my subaltern's-plus-Guards pay amounting to £216 a year, I had very little money. A special correspondent accustomed to travelling in luxury and living at the best hotels at the newspaper's expense is singularly ill-suited to employ what my father used to call 'the modest shifts of decent indigence', and I decided that, if we were not to retrench desperately, my madam and I, I should have to do something about it.

I resolved to write a shocker. While we were together at the Press Château at the front John Buchan had frequently urged me to try my hand at a shocker – writing shockers was his favourite form of relaxation, the author of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* assured me. If I could make fifty or a hundred pounds out of a sensational novel, I reflected, it would help keep the wolf from the door until such time as I could get back to the front, where field allowances almost doubled one's pay and the opportunities to spend money were few. A shocker, then, it should be. As I racked my brains for a theme, watching the cormorants fishing off Rhu Point and the new Clyde-built submarines and destroyers steaming up the loch, where there was a measured mile, for their trials, my old battle dream about being a British agent without papers in war-time Germany came back to me, and *The Man With The Clubfoot* was born.

I think of it as my 'shell-shocker' to this day.

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I had always been impressed with the romantic possibilities of the spy in fiction. One of the first plays my father took me to see as a schoolboy was William Gillette's London production of that stirring melodrama of the American Civil War, *Secret Service*, with Gillette, the dashing, the fascinating, in the thrilling rôle of the Federal secret agent in the Southern household. Even when I discovered in my years abroad what a dingy and disreputable business espionage really is, the lure persisted. On various occasions I had come into contact with secret agents and stool pigeons and, as the subject interested me, I had stored up a lot of miscellaneous information about it.

My couriers who travelled between London and Holland in the early days of the War moved in a regular William le Queux atmosphere. They were always being tackled by mysterious nosey parties in the hotels of Rotterdam, Amsterdam or The Hague, and on the boats. On one occasion Alfred Pemberton, Max's son, now the well-known London advertising consultant, who had gone over to Holland as courier for me, was asked as a favour by a well-spoken Englishman at The Hague to post a letter for him in London. The episode must have been witnessed by one of our agents: at any rate on landing at Dover Alfred was promptly arrested, taken up to London and lodged at Scotland Yard for the night – it appeared that the Englishman who had approached him was on the suspect list. This happened on a Saturday night and I got wind of it only on Sunday morning when I rushed round to the Yard and, with the assistance of Quinn, the then head of the Special Branch, secured the very indignant Alfred's release.

Often my couriers brought to the office Belgian refugees who had stories to tell of the War in Belgium. One of these was a Scottish tailor from Antwerp who gave me, in the broadest Doric, an intelligent description of the last days of Antwerp, for which I paid him, I think, £5. A week or so later he came back and explained he had a chance of work in Rotterdam – the trouble was he had no passport. Would I sign the form, recommending him as a fit and proper person to receive one, as he knew nobody else in London? I reflected that I really knew nothing about the man and declined, fortunately

for me, for a month or so later a London doctor was charged before the magistrates with rendering this service to our Scottish friend who proved to be not a Scotsman at all, but a German, a former Prussian Guardsman, who had worked for years in Scotland before the War as a tailor, but also probably as a spy.

Another mysterious person who called on me in those crowded days was a lanky, sandy-haired party with the strange name of MacLinks – John MacLinks. He spoke English with a strong German accent, but he had a British passport. According to his story, he was a music-hall artist who for years had travelled with an act round the smaller cities of Central Europe. As the War had robbed him of his livelihood his proposal was that he should go to Germany for the *Daily Mail*. He declared that he could pass as a German anywhere and could, in addition, speak all German dialects – he would go to Kiel and see what he could find out for us about the Fleet. I told him he was crazy, that he would be shot out of hand. But he insisted that the risk was his – let us give him something on account for expenses and he would be content to be paid by results. At length, with considerable reluctance, I let him have £25 and he departed.

I never expected to hear from him again. But in a little while he wrote to me from Westfalia via an address in Holland. He described how, having fallen asleep in the train between Holland and Germany, he had been carried across the frontier, but had bluffed his way through the passport control by pretending to be a waiter who had escaped from London in order to rejoin his regiment (I made use of this incident in *The Man With The Clubfoot*). He wrote to me once again – this time actually from Kiel – to announce his arrival. The last I heard of him he was interned as a British subject in the Berlin civilian prisoners of war camp at Ruhleben where he presumably remained until the Armistice.

In the early days of the World War I had some fugitive contacts with that dramatic figure, Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, Director of Naval Intelligence in the War period, under whose

Machiavellian direction the most vital secrets of the enemy were pitilessly laid bare. Our Intelligence Division, under pressure of war enormously expanded from the humble beginnings referred to earlier in this narrative,¹ as well as the mysterious activities of the most closely-guarded branch of the Admiralty, the famous Room O.B. 40, played a prominent part in this achievement. In Room O.B. 40 Sir Alfred Ewing, Director of Naval Education, had gathered about him a small staff of expert decipherers who, day in, day out, employed an almost uncanny skill in decoding enemy cipher messages and signals picked up by wireless.

Their work was to some extent facilitated by an amazing piece of good fortune that befell us only a very short time after the outbreak of hostilities. The German cruiser *Magdeburg*, pursued by the Russian Navy in the Baltic, ran ashore in a fog and for some unexplained reason, in the confusion of abandoning ship, the confidential signal-books and codes were not thrown overboard in their weighted covers and sunk, as they should have been. The Russians captured them and sent them to the British Admiralty with the result that, right up to the time of the Battle of Jutland in May 1916, I believe, when the Germans changed their cipher, the bulk of their secret naval messages were read in Room O.B. 40. Early information of Sir Roger Casement's ill-fated expedition to Ireland to start the Easter Rebellion and the disclosure of the famous Zimmermann dispatch (the dispatch from the German Foreign Office offering Mexico an alliance with Germany against the United States) which had much to do with subsequently bringing America into the War, are the most noted of the many coups pulled off by Room O.B. 40.

The famous 'Blinker' Hall's rather ascetic face and aureole of snow-white hair, suggesting the Curé d'Ars more than a professional sailor, gave no hint of the master mind, the incomparable blend of bluff and cunning, that lay behind. 'Wisdom is better than weapons of war' is a saying he liked to quote as the motto of the Secret Service. He took the chair at a lecture delivered at the *Sunday Times* National Book Exhibition in

¹ See p. 155.

November 1937 by Captain von Rintelen, the renowned German Intelligence agent, who owed his ultimate arrest to the insatiable curiosity evinced in his movements by 'Blinker' Hall and his merry men, and as the speaker – with much good humour, be it said – enlarged upon his tribulations at the hands of the British, the Admiral's smile grew wider and more enigmatic – he looked like the cat that has swallowed the canary. Once in the War I encountered the D.N.I. in strangely jubilant mood. It was in the last days of August 1914, when the news from the front was of the blackest, that, as I was hurrying along a corridor in the Admiralty, I came face to face with him. 'We've got 'em, we've got 'em!' he cried exultantly, waving a telegram in my face. It was the first news of the Battle of Heligoland, reporting a decisive British victory at sea and the loss of two enemy cruisers.

Through many books on secret service published in England since the War a shadowy figure goes gliding. A man of power and mystery looms up, the guiding hand behind our Secret Service. His appearance is described, his remarks are quoted, but his name is mentioned never. He is always spoken of *tout court* as 'C'.

Sir Paul Dukes, the doughty British secret agent in Russia in the early day of Bolshevism, recounting in the book he wrote about his experiences the circumstance of his enrolment in the Intelligence, tells of being taken to a singular office in London where he was confronted by this cryptic individual. In their fascinating work *Strange Intelligence, Memoirs of Naval Secret Service*, Hector C. Bywater and H. C. Ferraby, describing a secret service conference in pre-War days, speak of the presiding official as 'an elderly man, grey-haired, wearing a monocle. His figure inclines to stoutness, but the weather-tanned face, with its keen grey eyes, stamps him as an out-of-door man. He is, in fact, a post-captain on the retired list of the Royal Navy. Let us designate him as "C".'

When Trebitsch Lincoln, this Hungarian Jew who was in turn itinerant evangelist, Anglican clergyman and British Member of Parliament, came to London in 1914 to try and worm himself into the British Intelligence as a German spy,

he was told by the British War Office that 'a certain naval officer would very much like to see you', as he relates in his otherwise somewhat apocryphal memoirs. The officer in question, he was warned, would not be introduced by name, 'as that must remain a profound secret'. 'Indeed,' adds Trebitsch Lincoln, 'I do not know to this day who he is. He is simply known as "C".'

A small service I was able to render 'C' in the early days of the War, when I put him on his guard against a certain individual, not a British subject, who I knew to be a thorough-paced scamp, started a friendship between us that lasted to the day, almost to the hour, indeed, of his death. I never worked for him and he gave no secrets away to me; but he told me many stories of secret service, including one or two of his own adventures in the days before the War. Once he showed me a photograph of a heavily-built German-looking individual in most unmistakably German clothes and was entranced when I failed to recognise the party in question—it was himself, disguised for the purposes of a certain delicate mission he once undertook on the Continent before the War. He never had much use for what he called 'crape hair and grease paint' in secret service work: but on this occasion, he informed me apologetically, disguise was indispensable. 'C' was always very friendly to me, and when I went out to France to join the Irish Guards on active service he presented me with a splendid 16-magnification Ross telescope which to this day is one of my most cherished possessions.

I used to go and chat with him at his war-time headquarters situated in the attics of a block of residential flats near Charing Cross. A private lift shot the caller up seven floors to a regular maze of passages, and steps, and oddly shaped rooms. No casual visitor ever penetrated here. The liftman was of the service, too: the organisation had its own arrangements whereby ordinary inquirers were interviewed and thoroughly 'vetted' before being admitted to the labyrinth under the roof.

The first thing to meet the eye on entering the Chief's room was a picture representing a group of French villagers facing a Prussian firing squad in the war of 1870—a sort of 'Memento

mori' in that setting. There was nothing dramatic or mysterious about the quiet study with its small windows high above the London chimney pots and the Thames, rolling along its 'liquid history', as John Burns once called it, far below. A plain work-table, a big safe, some maps and charts on the walls, a vase of flowers, one or two seascapes recalling 'C's' passion for sailing and inevitably, scattered about, various examples of the mechanical gadgets in which he revelled with boyish enthusiasm – a patent compass, a new sort of electric clock.

Forthright and four-square as the Tower of London, he would confront me. A breath of the sea, which he abandoned with infinite regret to take on this shore job, seemed yet to cling to this bluff, brawny Englishman, no longer young when, long awaited, '*der Tag*' broke thunderously to test the organisation so patiently, so skilfully built up.

A Roman head, bald of cranium with greying hair close-cropped at the sides, strapping shoulders filling the undress naval jacket, eyes as grey as the North Sea to which they had for years been constantly turned, a jutting, imperious nose, a massive chin. Lines about the rather grim mouth, the ring of authority in the voice, spoke of habits of iron discipline acquired in boyhood. But asked to name the salient characteristic of this extraordinary man, one would say his gentleness.

Sir Paul Dukes wrote of him: 'He was a British officer and an English gentleman of the finest stamp, absolutely fearless and gifted with limitless resources of subtle ingenuity.' Indeed, his shrewdness was uncanny. If he was as gentle as the dove, he was at the same time as wise as the serpent. The Germans were full of tricks, but they seldom caught him off his guard. He was as cunning as an old dog fox, as *rusé* and as full of guile as a veteran sergeant-major, and was seen at his best in the never-ending battle of wits that centred notably in the efforts of either side to land the other with bogus information or faked plans, a leading aspect of Anglo-German naval rivalry in pre-War days. I can see him before me now, with his wise old grey head cocked shrewdly on one side while

his fingers tapped out a little tune on his ivory letter-opener clenched between his teeth, a trick of his when he was turning anything over in his mind.

He had nerves of steel, and his phlegm was unshatterable. In the darkest moments, it was a tonic to his staff to see him at his desk, calm, affable, humorous, unafraid. Disappointment, checks, the chicane of rival departments, treachery, defeat, disaster, even, were all in the day's work – 'C's' attitude never altered. Misfortune could be redressed, success wooed afresh – he would bide his time, trusting the man on the spot, while quietly hatching other schemes, new directives under that big-domed head. He left nothing to chance – if the stakes warranted it, he usually had two strings to his bow.

I would be sitting with him when the charming young lady who was his confidential secretary would appear and silently lay a report on his desk. Were it favourable, he would chuckle 'Ha!' while a grimly roguish smile, boding no good to someone, would slowly spread over the broad face – his smile could be relentlessly sardonic. From his tranquil room high above the London streets a great web spread right across the enemy countries: he was the spider waiting with infinite patience for the flies.

Secret service has been called 'the game without rules'. The phrase is misleading. There are unwritten laws in Intelligence work which all permanent agents respect. During the War, at neutral centres such as Rotterdam, Berne or Copenhagen, the German and the Allied agents, each group well known to the other, worked in close proximity without seriously attempting to restrict one another's freedom of action. It was the kind of stalemate sometimes found at the front where the opposing trenches were only a few yards apart. There were even occasions when the two espionage systems would take concerted action to 'remove' some hireling spy who had started to include assassination in his bag of tricks for extracting money from either side impartially. I might add that the Intelligence heads of the various belligerent countries were not above exchanging communications with each other – usually through the medium of a 'double cross'

(i.e. an agent known to be working for either side) – on strictly business matters as, for instance, the fate of some agent who had disappeared.

'C' was a sportsman. He fought the enemy with clean weapons, as far as secret service weapons can be clean. Early in the War a story was current in Mayfair that Colonel von Ostertag, who had been military attaché at the German Embassy in London up to the outbreak of war and had then been given the direction of German espionage in England with headquarters at The Hague, had been recognised in a Bond Street shop by a woman at whose table he had often dined – he was very popular in London society. I tackled 'C' about it.

'It's quite possible,' was his calm rejoinder. 'The Colonel's mother is English – she lives at Kew. I heard the story and sent him word that he needn't have any hole and corner business with me. I told him, if he merely wanted to come over unofficially and see his mother and not to spy, it could probably be arranged.' A few months later word reached me in London that von Ostertag had died at The Hague. I rang up 'C' to tell him. 'So I hear,' he commented dryly. 'But is it true?'

He was up to every trick.

He was a man of tremendous physical and moral force. His only son was serving as an officer at the front and early in the War 'C' picked the young man up in a car at G.H.Q. to take him to Paris for a few days' leave. Travelling through the night at sixty miles an hour they hit an unlighted farmcart and the son who was driving was killed. 'C' was so badly injured that he had to be taken to a neighbouring hospital where one of his legs was amputated.

Now mark the Spartan character of the man. He was in his fifties yet, despite his grief over the death of his only son and the shock of his own injuries, followed by the removal of his leg, the day after the operation he was sitting up in bed at the hospital, conducting business over the telephone beside him. On his return to London he had an artificial leg fitted and at the same time provided himself with a man-size motor-scooter

made to his own specifications – it must have been the first motor-scooter in London – on which he used to travel between his office and the Ministries of Whitehall. Later, he had a motor-car fitted with the controls on the steering wheel in which he drove himself about – I rode with him many times.

I have heard that he knew no foreign language; but he made up for any shortcomings in this respect by other qualities of mind and an unfailing flair for picking men who did. Both before and during the War he had some prodigious linguists working for him. His mind was simple and direct, as logical as a Frenchman's. I don't know whether he ever met Clemenceau, but the Tiger would have taken to him. He was a mountain of common sense.

He had a great admiration for his 'opposite number with the French', as he called him, the late Colonel Dupont, head of the French Intelligence Service, the *Deuxième Bureau*, as it was called. He liked to tell the story of how, towards the end of the War, he crossed to France to confer with the Colonel and an individual, supposedly a French agent but known to both of them as a notorious double cross, advanced with a camera and asked leave to take a picture commemorating the meeting. 'C' demurred, but Dupont said, 'As far as I'm concerned, why not? One day soon I shall ride into Berlin at the head of my regiment and I'd like the Boches to know in advance what I look like so that they'll recognise me.' And, motioning to his British visitor to stand back, he told the spy to go ahead and take his picture. 'C' loved this story – he thought it so typical of French *panache*.

He had a dry humour which was apt to take one by surprise. One day he astonished his office staff by announcing, 'When I retire I intend to publish my memoirs. I shall call them "The Indiscretions of a Secret Service Chief"'. It will be a splendid-looking publication bound in red with the title and my name embossed in gold and consisting of 400 pages – every one of which will be blank!

After the War he developed heart trouble and decided to retire. He had lent me a small collection he had made of books about secret service published before the War, including the

memoirs of Major Le Caron, the celebrated Fenian spy – 'C' had known Le Caron and called him an unmitigated liar – so, hearing that my old friend was to leave London shortly, I called to return his books and bid him good-bye. I spent the afternoon with him, chatting over old times. I left him about 6 p.m. comfortably installed in a corner of the sofa. When his secretary went in to him soon after she found him dead.

He had died in harness, as he would have wished.

The villains of fiction, rather than the heroes, were ever my meat. Fagin, Count Fosco, Dr. Nikola, Count Dracula, those were the boys for me – even as a child, at the old Adelphi melodramas, I derived greater enjoyment from the reprehensible Mr. W. L. Abingdon, with his cigarette and glossy topper and cloak turned back with red over 'faultless' evening-dress, with his sneering airs and asides of uncompromising turpitude, than from the heroic but somewhat platitudinous Mr. William Terriss. By contrast with the villain and his unplumbed depths of baseness, the hero is all too apt to prove two-dimensional, a flat surface enclosed by virtue as a lake is enclosed by land. The only way to counteract this impression is to provide a good and plausible villain: since he and the hero are continually at grips in the forefront of the picture, the more human your villain appears, the more effectively your hero gains depth and comes to life.

Now, as the plot of my shocker unfolded itself in my mind, my hero had to be a British secret service man. In order to give him a worthy opponent to match his wits against, I decided that I would have to create a master spy, one who should incorporate all I knew of Prussian efficiency and ruthlessness. I am often asked whether my Dr. Grundt, the Man with the Clubfoot, was based on a real person. Well, when I was turning the character over in my mind, I found myself thinking of an unmannerly German oaf who, years before, when I was very young, had grossly insulted me in the Press canteen of the Reichstag. Over lunch one day Edwin Wilcox (now *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Paris) had handed me a new pair of theatre-glasses he had bought to try and this loutish fellow

rushed up and accused me in a hectoring, screaming voice of 'staring' at him, although I was not conscious of ever having set eyes on him before.

He was short and stout and middle-aged with a large beard, and I don't think I ever saw a man in such a passion. He was literally foaming with rage, his small eyes dancing, his beard quivering. I discovered afterwards that he represented an obscure pan-German, and therefore, probably, violently anti-English newspaper. The incident, utterly unimportant in itself, came back to me, years later, when the character of Dr. Grundt, with his uncontrollable gusts of passion, was forming in my mind.

As for the clubfoot, when I was a very small boy there was a clubfooted man who went to the church I attended and I always found him vaguely frightening. On the other hand, though I did not know it then, I now realise that subconsciously 'Old C.' with his wooden leg, his big body, his tremendous drive and a certain gallow's humour that would flash out at times, must have influenced me strongly.

I wrote *The Man With The Clubfoot* very quickly. Such sense of construction as I possessed was purely instinctive; and I followed the curious plan of writing first the scenes that most appealed to me, afterwards tackling the intermediate chapters indispensable for joining them up. The feminine interest was, I admit, somewhat secondary: Rudyard Kipling who wrote to me that the story held him 'for forty breathless minutes, end to end,' added, 'But I see that the "female interest" is a mere concession to public taste!'

My shocker finished, I sent it to the firm of agents which had handled my first war book, suggesting that they might be able to get it serialised. The other day I came across a letter of theirs, giving a list of the leading magazines which had turned the story down. The MS. came back. Undaunted, I tried a fresh line. I remembered that the Amalgamated Press, a Northcliffe concern in those days, ran a cheap publication called the Sexton Blake Library which paid a flat price of about £40 outright for quick-moving adventure stories. I fired the MS. in. At Fleetway House my yarn most happily fell into the

hands of Back, head of the fiction department, who, ruling that the story was too good for the Sexton Blake collection, passed it to *Answers*. When he wrote to me in that sense, I dropped a line to Sir George Sutton, the head of the Amalgamated Press at that time, who had always been a good friend of mine; and the next thing I knew I had word from William Blackwood, editor of *Answers*, that the story was accepted and that *Answers* intended to feature it.

The late Herbert Jenkins, who founded the publishing firm of Herbert Jenkins Ltd., had not been long in business for himself at this time: I had known him before the War when he was with John Lane. Jenkins was a spry fellow with a pretty good idea of what the public liked to read – later, he branched out as an author himself and made a success of a humorous novel called *Bindle*. I dare say he was the only publisher curious enough to buy *Answers* in order to read the first instalment of the new spy serial they had so extensively advertised. At any rate, not knowing who 'Douglas Valentine' was – still debarred by Army regulations from writing under my own name, I had made up a pseudonym out of my brother's Christian name and my own – he wrote at once and said he would like to publish *The Man With The Clubfoot* in book form.

The novel was published in 1918, and has continued to sell ever since. It has been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Finnish, Swedish, Danish, Estonian, Dutch and Japanese. For some reason, when it first appeared, it was considered suitable reading for the young and several men have told me it was read out to them at their private schools. As the secret service background was adequately plausible, it was generally believed among the Intelligence Corps that an 'I' officer was the author – my friend, John Prioleau, now motoring correspondent of the *Observer*, who was with the Intelligence Corps in Egypt, told me that my modest shocker dropped like a bombshell into his mess.

That is how, thanks to an artillery observation officer's mistake, I found myself a novelist.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MAKING OF THE PEACE

THE Paris Peace Conference was a dog fight between the old diplomacy and the new, and the new diplomacy won. The politicians made the peace; the diplomatists were left to twiddle their thumbs in their luxurious hotel suites. Professional diplomacy, whose advice was disregarded, is entitled to attribute the resultant mess to that circumstance, and indeed, our statesmen who afterwards made such a hash of our Italian policy in the Abyssinian War might have learnt from the example of Versailles the danger of dealing with foreign affairs in the terms of domestic politics. But it is open to doubt whether professional diplomacy would have made a better job of a task which, on all counts, was doomed to failure from the start.

In the first place, the programme before the Conference was too vast. In the second place, the Allies had omitted to co-ordinate their respective peace terms in advance. Thirdly, the Conference followed too soon upon the heels of the Armistice, so that from the outset the atmosphere was hectic and antagonistic to a long view, serene deliberation, and calm discussion. The opinion grows upon me with the years that the cardinal mistake was to begin discussing peace before the actual occupation of Berlin by the Allies had brought home to the Germans the indisputable fact that they had lost the War. Had an armistice been denied to the enemy until after the effectual occupation of the country, Germany would have taken part in the peace negotiations, as did France at Versailles in 1871, instead of seeing herself brusquely ordered to sign a peace treaty drawn up in her absence.

Foch granted the armistice of November 1918 on the

grounds that he was unwilling to incur the responsibility for further loss of life. Actually, he had no choice. The Germans may have lost the closing battles of the War, but their High Command maintained its reputation to the last by the skilful organisation of the German retreat. Mined roads and bridges held up the Allied pursuit across the Meuse while delayed action mines in rear of the Allied Armies played havoc with their communications. In my own Division, for the first time since Mons, owing to the continually recurring interruption of railway communications behind us – sometimes three weeks after the Germans had retired – the Guards were reduced to their iron rations and many of the men had their feet coming through their boots on the long march to the Rhine. The Allies were at a standstill: it was German staff work, excellent to the end, that prevented the national humiliation of 1806 from being repeated and saved Berlin from enemy occupation.

The years bring strange contrasts. Earlier in this narrative I have told how, as a schoolboy knowing no German, I stood on the cathedral square at Cologne in the midst of a bitterly Anglophobe German crowd which, gathered under the windows of the Dom Hotel wildly cheered President Kruger and the Boer Generals who appeared on the balcony. Eighteen years later, almost to the day, as Captain of the Irish Guards and billeting officer of the Guards Division then marching on the Rhine, I flung my reins to the porter at the entrance to this selfsame hotel and proceeded to commandeer it for the use of the British. I must say it is an extraordinarily exhilarating business to go clattering through the streets of a large modern city, taking possession of buildings as it pleases one, here an hotel, there a school – I remember I quartered the Guards Divisional Staff in a Cubist picture gallery on the Dom Platz all among the rhomboid nudes and lopsided studies of still life.

To my astonishment and, I would add, disgust, the Germans received our billeting party with open arms. At the hotels I commandeered they would not give me a bill for a drink or a meal – they fawned. We had some funny experiences.

One place, where my transport sergeant spotted a yard which he thought would do for his G.S. wagons, turned out to be a girls' school. Our loud knocking brought to the door a terrified, spinster-like person with, as it seemed to me, most of her charges bobbing about behind her. With arms outspread as though to protect her brood she said solemnly, 'Herr Offizier, I commend these innocent young maidens to your honour as an English gentleman!' I cannot say that the young maidens took such a grave view of the situation – they giggled and scuffled in the background and kept jumping up in the air to get a better view of the representatives of the licentious British soldiery. As a matter of fact, the yard proved too small for our purposes and we rode away, much to the relief of the headmistress but, I fancy, rather to the disappointment of the young ladies.

After the troops arrived, Divisional Headquarters moved out to Lindenthal, a suburb of Cologne. I was billeted, together with my soldier servant, at the house of a well-to-do German doctor and on arriving with my billeting order, was ushered into the presence of the doctor's wife. She was shabby and thin and middle-aged, but an obvious gentlewoman, and her manner was icy – no fawning about the Frau Doktor. She said very stiffly, 'My maid speaks a little English and if you wish for anything, your servant can inform her – in this way, there will be no necessity for us to meet' – it is impossible to convey the frigid hostility of her tone.

Well, I saw no more of her after that. But they made me very comfortable and won my heart particularly by the way they looked after my servant, the faithful Christopher Fitzpatrick. So when, about the middle of January 1919, I was going home on leave, I sent word to the Frau Doktor through Fitzpatrick to know whether there was anything I could get for her in London. I expected she would ask for chocolate, a cheese, a ham, if she asked for anything, but the reply came back, she would like some spices. I realised then that, as nearly all spices are of tropical origin, the British blockade had deprived German housewives of these condiments for four long years.

So when I came back from leave I brought with me in my valise a big package containing cochineal and cinnamon and vanilla and ginger and a lot of similar stuff which Fortnum and Mason had put up for me and received, still through my servant, the Frau Doktor's grateful thanks. Then, at the end of January, I was demobilised. I thought it would be no more than good manners to take leave of my hostess in person.

She consented to receive me. I said in German, 'Gnädige Frau, I have been very happy and very comfortable as the recipient of your involuntary hospitality and I want to thank you for all you have done for me and my servant.'

She said, 'The Herr Doktor and I have found you most considerate,' and paused. 'If we have not been more friendly,' she went on, 'it is because – because' – her voice shook a little and she looked away. 'You see,' she explained in a toneless voice, 'we lost our three boys in the War.' With that she gave me her thin, cold hand. 'Good-bye, Herr Hauptmann,' she said. 'We shall not meet again, but at least I wish you all good fortune!' And with a stiff little bow she left me.

The beginning of February 1919 found me back in England, demobilised. But three days after I had laid my Guards gold hat away for the last time, I was rushed across to Paris to take charge of the *Daily Mail* staff at the Peace Conference. The auspices were wholly unfavourable. As though to stress the discordant note which reverberated through the peace congress from start to finish, I discovered that I was to replace George Curnock, who had managed to fall foul of 'Billie' Hughes, the chief Australian delegate, over some episode the rights and wrongs of which I have long since forgotten. Northcliffe, with headquarters at Fontainebleau, was in full cry after Lloyd George, Lloyd George was squabbling with the Foreign Office, Clemenceau with Foch and Pichon, President Wilson with his Secretary of State, Lansing. I found I was not to be allowed to act as an independent and, as I hope, an unbiased, observer, but was expected to follow the lead of *The Times* which at Northcliffe's behest was sniping at Lloyd George from behind every rock. To my lively astonishment the Press Section of the British Delegation was in charge of Lloyd George's

friend, Lord Riddell, proprietor of a Sunday journal which we had been forbidden to take in at school as being somewhat too lurid for the youthful mind. Lord Riddell had always been friendly to me and he never suffered the peculiar circumstances of my position to affect our relations. But I could never take him seriously as an expert on foreign affairs and to watch him floundering among the intricacies of some of the problems he was called upon to expound to us gave me a sort of Alice-in-Wonderland feeling.

From the newspaper standpoint it was impossible to do justice to the Paris Peace Conference. The variety and the magnitude of the problems under discussion meant that topics of the greatest importance in foreign affairs, which in the normal way would have led the paper, had to be compressed into a paragraph or even left out. The best I could hope to do was to try and keep abreast of the most important day-to-day developments, while dodging the thunderbolts from Fontainebleau, at the same time editing a column of Conference Notes in the *Paris Daily Mail* and, at one period, writing a daily editorial.

On my staff I had G. Ward Price, already at that time one of the most highly experienced special correspondents in Europe, and between us we had various old and tried sources of information, in the British as well as the foreign delegations. But the New Diplomacy had little use for the old. Practised diplomats like Sir William (now Lord) Tyrrell and Jules Cambon were cold-shouldered, and Lord Hardinge, the head of our Foreign Office, who was installed as overlord of the Hôtel Majestic, the principal headquarters of the British Delegation, seemed to spend most of his ample leisure composing the squabbles between high and less high British officials as to who should have a private sitting-room and who should not. Commissions of experts were appointed to deal with the innumerable territorial problems under consideration by the Conference, but as often as not the Big Four – Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Woodrow Wilson and Orlando – brushed their findings aside.

At one of Mr. Lloyd George's periodical meetings with the British newspaper correspondents, I tackled him about the

way in which the experts were being disregarded – the case in point, if I remember rightly, was the report of the Commission on Poland. ‘Don’t you think, sir,’ said I, ‘that the Commission is entitled to expect that its recommendations will be followed?’ The Prime Minister rounded on me sharply. ‘Certainly not,’ he rapped out. ‘I should always feel myself at liberty to overrule the findings of any body of experts.’

It was a point of view, but it did not make for smooth running – on my daily rounds of the different delegations I found myself moving in an atmosphere of perpetual exasperation.

I remember one evening after dinner going with Ward Price to call on a friend of ours at the headquarters of the Italian Delegation. It was the day on which President Wilson had issued his famous appeal to the Italian people over the heads of the Italian Delegation in the Fiume question and a good deal of excitement was evident in the big hall of the Hôtel Edouard VII where the Italians were housed. Ward Price and I were chatting amicably to our acquaintance when suddenly Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister and Chief Italian delegate, appeared through the swing door in his street clothes. He greeted us and then, without warning, launched into a violent diatribe in French against the Allies in general and Woodrow Wilson in particular.

The hall was full of Italians. They came streaming from all sides as the Premier’s ringing tones resounded and made a circle about him as, with eyes flashing and uplifted hand, he thundered on, pointing a denunciatory finger now at ‘Wardie’, now at me. The idea of indulging in a slanging match fortissimo with the Prime Minister of Italy did not commend itself to either of us; but in any case it would have been impossible to stem that foaming spate of oratory long enough to have interjected a single word. Faces taut with excitement, flaming glances, surrounded us, and every one of Orlando’s periods was saluted by vociferous rounds of applause and cries of ‘Bravo, il Presidente!’

The few minutes this grotesque scene lasted were among the most embarrassing of any I have ever spent.

Woodrow Wilson kept himself sedulously clear of the

newspaper men so that I never met him to speak to, although I saw Colonel House, his *Eminence grise*, several times a week at American Headquarters at the Crillon. But I had sundry opportunities for observing the President at close quarters and I cannot say that he made a sympathetic impression on me, with his long upper lip and long teeth, suggesting a horse. His skin had an odd, shining appearance, what the French call *glabre*: his eye-glasses gleamed, the high white collars he affected gleamed, the revers of his frock-coat gleamed – I thought of him as a shiny man. Since those days I have read his daughter's account of his life in the home circle and realise that Woodrow Wilson must have possessed qualities of simplicity and charm which were not apparent to the casual beholder.

Colonel House, who was always accessible to me, interested me profoundly. It has ever been a habit of mine to judge men by their faces and it puzzled me to discover how little seemingly of the strength of character of Woodrow Wilson's chosen confidant was disclosed in the colonel's features, the gentle eyes, the predominance of the brow over the lower part of the face. I found him to be one who always knew his own mind but was unrivalled in the art of concealing his thoughts until he had drawn out the point of view of the other side. House was a great humanist. He had made a study of human nature. He knew that in politics, as between two points of view, there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong, and always looked for the middle way. I was astonished to perceive in the many talks we had together, what a grasp this placid, soft-spoken Texan, whose only political experience had been gleaned in the highly specialised field of American politics, had gained of the intricacies of European State rivalries. In particular, he was fully aware that this seething mass of contending nationalities was in no mood to receive the Tables of the Law brought down from the mountain by the American Moses, and it was a tragedy that his personal influence over Woodrow Wilson came to an end during the Peace Conference, at the precise moment when it would have been of most advantage. Years after those Paris days, House told me he had no idea as to who or what set the President against him: a note he sent to

Woodrow Wilson as the latter lay dying, begging to be allowed to come and see him, remained unanswered.

Hampson Gary, United States Minister to Switzerland, who had been American Consul-General at Cairo during the War, came from the Colonel's home town of Austin, Texas. Lunching with Colonel and Mrs. House one day during the Peace Conference, my wife and I met the Hampson Garys and their two delightful children, a boy and a girl, and Hampson Gary told us a charming story about Field-Marshal Lord Allenby. During the Palestine campaign Allenby invited the American Minister and his wife, whom he had known in Cairo, to visit him at his General Headquarters. They went, taking the two children along, and on arriving at G.H.Q., were bidden to breakfast with the Commander-in-Chief. It was the morning on which the drive for Jerusalem began and throughout the meal there was a perpetual coming and going of staff officers, A.D.C.s and orderlies. Nevertheless, after breakfast, while his Staff waited, Allenby insisted on taking the two small children on his knees and showing them on his map how he proposed to capture the Holy City. Those two little Americans are grown up now: it will be a story to tell their children of how two American kids sat on the lap of the conqueror of the Holy Places in the World War on the very morning that the thrust for Jerusalem started and heard from 'The Bull's' own lips of his plans.

When Colonel House was engaged I used to see Gordon Auchincloss, his son-in-law and chief secretary. Auchincloss is now a successful and much respected New York lawyer; but he has not forgotten (as he reminded me, the last time we met) the night that he, Colonel Smith, who was likewise on the staff of the American Delegation, and I were supping together at that celebrated Montmartre restaurant, the Abbaye de Thélème, when a Frenchman at an adjoining table struck an American officer. In the ensuing hubbub all the British and Americans in the place instinctively drew together and Auchincloss, Smith and I linked arms in anticipation of a concerted rush. However, the management acted promptly. The fact that the original offender was French made no difference: he was

through the swing doors and out on the Place Pigalle in a twinkling, peace was restored and we resumed our supper.

There was no distinction for anyone at the Peace Conference and few, if any, 'scoops'. Ward Price secured a sensational interview with Foch, which landed the Generalissimo in serious trouble with Clemenceau – the French newspapers were not allowed to print it. George Adam, *The Times* correspondent, and I exclusively published in our respective newspapers the military terms to be offered to the Germans, which were supposed to be a closely-guarded secret – I might remark that, at the Paris Conference, no document, however secret, remained secret for more than twenty-four hours. Our coup caused considerable fluttering in all the British dovecotes and next day General Thwaites, Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office, whom I had known in the trenches at Loos, sent for me. 'Old Tin Eye', as they called him, wore a somewhat hangdog air which did not escape me. 'I suppose you wouldn't care to tell me where you got those military terms?' he asked with careful nonchalance. 'No, General,' I replied. 'Tin Eye' appeared much relieved. 'I told 'em you wouldn't,' he confided to me cheerfully. 'Good day!'

Writing nearly two decades after, it is with a sense of unreality that one recalls the fierce hostility towards the beaten foe that animated the whole Conference, individually and collectively, myself with the rest. I do not remember that I or any of us was particularly exercised by the way in which the German delegates who came to receive the peace terms were isolated like lepers at Versailles, although there was general approval of Clemenceau's action in disciplining the officials responsible for the breakdown of the police arrangements at Versailles which allowed an infuriated crowd to hoot and stone the delegates on their arrival – so dangerous was the mood of the rabble that, as one of the German typists told me afterwards, the delegates were convinced they would be torn to pieces. Of course, the French, with memories of invasion yet fresh in their minds, had the right to be bitter. There is something defiling in the eyes of the French about invasion. They speak of it with loathing and with horror, as they might of

some abominable insult offered to the consecrated Eucharist in a church: something in them much deeper than *amour propre* was wounded almost to death as long as the foot of the invader trod French soil. But in four long years of war the rest of the Allied peoples, too, had got into the way of regarding the Germans as mad dogs, outlaws and pariahs; and it seemed no more than fitting that they should be treated as such. The very atmosphere of the Peace Conference dripped with this savage animosity and even those of us who had learnt on the battlefield to respect the Germans as a gallant foe came under its spell.

Truly, mob psychology is a degrading thing.

It seems almost incredible to-day, but this rancour prevailed even against the Austrians. I was at the railway-station at St. Germain-en-Laye to witness the arrival of the Austrian delegates when they in turn presented themselves and I have a very lively recollection of my feeling of embarrassment, indeed, of indignation, when one of the delegation, on descending from the train, ventured to address me. It was an elderly man with proud, aquiline features and an air of great dignity. Speaking in perfect English in a voice that trembled with emotion, he said, 'I see you are an Englishman. I beg of you to bear witness to what I say. I never bore arms in this war against your people. I served in the Red Cross. I tried to help your prisoners, but I did not fight against England. I am Slatin Pasha!'

I was greatly moved. I could not help it, but the tears came into my eyes. Slatin, the friend of King Edward, of Cromer, of Kitchener, the captive of the Mahdi, the man who had tried to save Gordon—I saw myself again as a schoolboy, in the Petre Library at Downside, devouring his immortal book, that ghastly record of fanaticism and cruelty *With Fire and Sword in the Sudan*. There was something humiliating in the spectacle of a man with Rudolf Slatin's record having to make public testimony of the self-evident truth that he was the friend of England. I put out my hand. 'All Englishmen honour the name of Slatin,' I told him rather huskily. And we shook hands.

This was one of the rare moments of drama I experienced at

the Peace Conference. Another was on the occasion of the handing over the peace terms to the German Delegation, headed by Herr von Brockdorf-Rantzau, in what had once been the restaurant of the Trianon Palace Hotel at Versailles. It will be remembered that von Brockdorf-Rantzau gave deep offence by not rising to read the singularly truculent German reply. He was the true type of Prussian aristocrat, tall, angular, unyielding and as he spoke he tightly clutched the edges of the table at which he remained so firmly seated, as though fearing lest, on an imperious wave of the Tiger's gloved hand, a gendarme might attempt to drag him to his feet. In a metallic, barrack-yard voice, gabbling and stumbling over his words, he flung the feeble defiance of his disarmed and starving country into the hard faces all about. There should have been sympathy for the lone and helpless champion, pity for his plight, respect for his spirit. There was none. We were all outraged, even to the American President, and we proclaimed it loudly over the tea-cups after the sitting and in the newspapers next day.

I witnessed this historic scene in company with Cuthbert Holmes, Camp Commandant of the Supreme War Council (which habitually met at the Trianon Palace) and Count John de Salis, attaché at the British Embassy in Paris and eldest son of Count de Salis, whom I knew in Berlin,¹ the three of us wedged into the dumb-waiter of the restaurant where this memorable session was held. Space was strictly limited and the British and American Press had had to raffle for seats. I was among the unlucky ones. But Cuthbert Holmes, who had been an officer in the Irish Guards at the front with John de Salis and me, came to my rescue. As officer responsible for the interior economy of the Supreme War Council, he had the run of the Trianon Palace Hotel, and having given us an excellent lunch, conducted us with great secrecy to a serving pantry where we discovered that, by standing on the dumb waiter, and poking our heads through the trap, we had an excellent view of the council chamber. As Cuthbert had some doubts as to how the Secretary-General of the Peace Conference

¹ See pp. 94-96.



EUROPE WALKS TO ITS DOOM. VERSAILLES, 1919
(*Daily Mail*)

would regard this proceeding, we waited until the session was under way and then, like so many jacks-in-the-box, our three heads popped up. It was abominably hot and we were all very cramped; but we found ourselves within a very few yards of von Brockdorf-Rantzau as he made his historic reply and enjoyed a much better view of the proceedings than many of the delegates.

One of 'Cubby' Holmes's prerogatives as Camp Commandant of the Supreme War Council was to hold a key of the gardens of the Château of Versailles which enabled him to visit them after they were closed to the public. One summer evening he gave a dinner-party at a little restaurant overlooking one of the most famous pieces of water in the park, the Eau des Suisses, for two of the most beautiful of the many attractive lady secretaries attached to the British Delegation, Kathleen Carnegie and Nina Boyle, John de Salis, and my wife and me. There was a full moon and after dinner we strolled through the park. The magic of the gardens in the moonlight was breath-taking: the glamour of the eighteenth century seemed to come to life among the nymphs and fauns and tritons all bathed in silver and the clipped yew hedges casting hard, black shadows: there was the rustle of hooped skirts in every glade, the clack of high-heeled shoes on every marble stair. Now 1919 has joined the eighteenth century in the grave and 'Cubby', most princely of hosts, is back home in Vancouver. But the memory of his wonderful party in the park of Old Versailles remains: like a piece of old silver or a rare miniature, it is something to be taken out at leisure moments and fondly gazed upon.

Apart from the solemnity of the occasion and the magnificent opulence of the Hall of Mirrors as its setting, the actual signature of peace had little more impressiveness about it than would have attached to a file of frock-coated individuals anywhere advancing to a table to sign their names. Each delegation was given half a dozen cards of admission to the Hall of Mirrors specifically for the use of the rank-and-file among the combatants. In the British Delegation these were immediately grabbed by the staff sergeants, orderly-room clerks and their

ilk, but the French, with a proper sense of the dramatic, distributed their tickets to the worst cases of wounded they could find, what they call 'les grands mutilés de guerre'. The entrance of these six figures in their faded horizon bleu, faceless, armless, legless, blind, tapping their way into the presence of the world assembled in Congress, was a grim and macabre moment.

My memories of the Paris Peace are a jumble of confused impressions – of Clemenceau, with his face of an old house-dog and hands encased in grey thread gloves, on his feet at the President's table at some plenary session barking, 'Personne-de-plus-ne-demande-la-parole-la-séance-est-levée!' all in one breath, in order to choke off some notorious bore ready primed with a terrific oration on minority rights: of British Headquarters at the Hôtel Majestic – of Lawrence of Arabia, with his curiously girlish face, striding in Hedjaz dress through the lobby; of Mowbray, famous head-porter of the Midland, Manchester, specially imported by Sir Francis Towle to act as Cerberus, monument of Lancashire kindness and dry humour, who was to be caught napping on the celebrated occasion when he sternly ordered Marshal Joffre, who was paying a ceremonial call on the British, to fill in a form 'stating his business'; of 'Jacky' Fisher, that venerable but still lusty sea-dog, formally tailed and white-gloved, whirling the pretty typists round in the old-fashioned valse at the Saturday evening dances.

Other figures rise to the surface of my mind – lovable Bill Orpen in a white painter's smock in his studio at the Hôtel Astoria surrounded by his wonderful portraits of the leading delegates: my old and bearded friend, Jo Davidson, the sculptor, with his no less brilliant series of delegates' heads: Lord Balfour mooning along the rue Nitot, clutching the lapels of his coat: Marthe Chénal, in a Phrygian cap and draped in the tricolour, singing the 'Marseillaise' on the steps of the Opera, the night that peace was signed, to a rapt audience that jammed the big square and spilled over in its thousands on to the boulevards and the adjacent streets. These and other highlights stand out, but my mind retains no sustained picture of the Conference as a whole. The transition from the well-oiled grooves of my life in the Guards Division to the violent shocks,

the chicane and chaos of Paris 1919, was too violent, and I have never really succeeded in sorting out my impressions. Also I was suffering from a recurrence of my old war injury and no sooner was peace signed with Austria than I returned to London and went back to my dear Miss Macintosh's Empire Hospital in Vincent Square for a second operation. In this way, to my eternal regret, I was prevented from witnessing the Allies' march through Paris on the National Fête day, July 14.

The Peace Conference was my last important foreign assignment as a salaried Fleet Street man. When in the following year I was appointed Foreign Editor of the *Daily Mail*, I thought that my days as a 'special' were ended. I made one or two trips abroad to visit our correspondents, one, notably, to Germany, in the middle of the inflation crisis. It was the first time since I had been into the interior of the country since the War and the many symptoms of material and moral disintegration horrified me. The Berlin I had known was one of the cleanest cities in Europe; but now the streets were littered and untended, the pavements encumbered with swarms of pallid and half-starved pedlars and beggars, many of them hideously mutilated ex-service men, still wearing their ragged field grey. Vice was rampant, degeneracy openly flaunted, and the illicit night restaurants and gambling hells were so numerous that in a twelve hours' tour of the Berlin *Nachtleben*, from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., I did not see the half of them.

The mark stood at a penny to the pound, but prices adjusted themselves slowly at that time, 1920, and I lived like a prince on five shillings a day. At Hamburg a stranger accosted me in the street, inquiring whether I was interested in Chinese curios. He was a Hamburg dealer specialising in Chinese antiquities who, obliged by the slump in all luxury trades to close his shop, had transferred his stock to his house. I bought some lovely green curry dishes very cheap: had I known anything of Chinese art, I make no doubt I should have picked up some astonishing bargains. Down on the water-front a man in an extremely dilapidated motor-boat offered to show me round the harbour. He was a German-American from Hoboken,

who, still unnaturalised in America, was caught by the War in Germany and made to serve in the Fleet. He was filled with bitterness against the British. I was not surprised when I saw the harbour, which I had known so busy and teeming with shipping, utterly desolate, tenanted only by the rusting hulks of vessels laid up there by the British blockade. In Munich, where a Socialist Government was in office, I was advised to try and see a harumscarum agitator, a Bavarian of Austrian origin, Adolf Hitler by name. I actually got as far as calling upon him at his flat, but he was out and I could not spare the time to wait for an appointment.

That was a bad blunder of mine which I have since often regretted. The surest way of fathoming the character of a prominent public man is to know him before he becomes important. Power may mellow, but it does not alter the basic character: if anything it is like a magnifying glass which distorts any object viewed through it from a distance. If I could have had a talk with Adolf Hitler in Munich in 1920, when he was laughed at as an idealist or hounded as a dangerous fire-brand, I might take a more impartial view of him now. Actually for all practical purposes the rise of Mussolini and Hitler to world figures fell outside my period of activity as a special correspondent, although as Foreign Editor of the *Daily Mail* I was responsible for covering from my desk at Carmelite House the early days of Italian Fascism culminating in the March on Rome. But in the spring of 1922 my growing differences with Northcliffe hardened in my mind a decision which I had been considering for many months and I resigned to devote myself thenceforward to fiction. It was a hard wrench, especially as I was devoted to the Chief, as I think he was always well-disposed towards me: if he had lived – he died a few months later – I feel certain that our temporary estrangement would have been cleared up. A letter from Rudyard Kipling was a great solace. Replying to a letter of mine informing him of my decision, in his great kindness of heart he wrote, 'I felt sure that it was bound to come sooner or later and I can only offer you my very best wishes. We all read your books with the greatest zeal, and they always thrill and interest me.'

CHAPTER XXVI

TUTANKH-AMEN'S TOMB

NEWS is the presiding deity at Fleet Street. In Fleet Street the newspaper man proposes, but it is news which disposes. On quitting the service of the *Daily Mail*, I had believed that my days as a 'special' were over. One January afternoon, in 1922 a day of black fog, as I sat at my desk hard at work on a new novel, my brother Douglas, then Chief Editor of Reuter's, called up to ask how I would like to go to Egypt for the Agency.

Douglas, having surmounted the effects of a clip over the eye from a shell splinter on the Messines Ridge sufficiently to join the Murmansk Expedition, emerged from the Army intact and in due course turned up at the Paris Peace Conference in charge of the Reuter staff. He beat all comers with the evening paper flash he sent round the world from Versailles announcing the signature of peace: seeing him there in the selfsame setting of the Palace and historic Hôtel des Réservoirs, where another 'young Mr. Williams' had represented the famous news agency in analogous circumstances forty-eight years before, I felt that the wheel had indeed come full circle and that the continuity of history was triumphantly achieved. After Paris Douglas went to New York for Reuter's, was recalled to take our parent's old place as Chief Editor, but, office work not proving to his liking, he eventually returned to his former post in New York. To-day, as Chief Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* in the United States, he has the widest acquaintance with prominent men and women on both sides of the Atlantic: when Americans tell me, as they often do, that the *Daily Telegraph* has the best service of American

news of any British newspaper, I permit myself a small gurgle of brotherly pride.

I might here remark that the three of us, my wife, my brother and I seem to have between us an enormous number of acquaintances throughout the world. My wife had gained her stage experience travelling all over Australia, New Zealand and South Africa before I met her: moreover, as a leading London actress she made innumerable friends, both on the stage and off. As for myself, the reader of this narrative will have probably inferred that, in the course of a somewhat roving career, I have established contact with all sorts and conditions of people. The consequence is that, wherever we go, my wife and I, or my brother, we are continually meeting acquaintances or if not acquaintances, people who have points of contact with one or all of us. We can scarcely visit a hotel or a restaurant or a theatre at home or abroad, any of us, without somebody coming up to say hullo.

It is, of course, one of the results of easier travel, faster communications, enhanced in our case by the circumstances of our lives. As a matter of fact, I suppose that to-day everybody knows twice as many people as his or her parents knew. My father was a newspaper man all his life, in touch with prominent people, but I feel sure that either of us, my brother or I, must be personally acquainted with many more men and women in the public eye throughout the world than he ever was.

Personally I consider that a multiplicity of friends and acquaintances makes life great fun, besides being a constant stimulant to the memory. It can also be useful at times. More than once, I have been rescued in a dilemma over hotel rooms or some such thing by a hotel employee who remembered me: on one occasion, at Montreal, we made the timely discovery that the duty clerk at the reception desk at the Ritz, formerly of Shepherds Hotel at Cairo, had had the room next to my wife at the Deaconesses' Hospital there, when my wife was down with dysentery.

In this connection the Savoy Hotel often provides the Londoner abroad with an invaluable link with home. As an

Oxford degree is an open sesame to many professions, so is a reference from the Savoy Hotel regarded in the hotel world. The Savoy is a university from which for years past head waiters all over the world have graduated – in the most unexpected places, as far afield as the Southern Tunisian desert, I have had a welcoming smile from Savoy Hotel alumni.

When Douglas telephoned me from Reuter's about the Egyptian mission, I knew, without him telling me, what the assignment was. A few weeks previously *The Times* had published exclusively the startling announcement that Mr. Howard Carter, a well-known excavator, in association with Lord Carnarvon, had discovered the tomb of Tutankh-Amen, a Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings at Luxor. As far as could be seen, the tomb consisted of three small chambers – an ante-room, a store for funerary objects adjoining, which robbers in ancient times had opened and ransacked, and an inner chamber with a sealed entrance.

This inner chamber was the great enigma. The general lay-out of the tomb and the careful sealing of the entrance strongly suggested that it contained the royal sarcophagus. But the cement on the great stones blocking the doorway bore the stamp of the inspector of the royal burial-places, showing that he had entered the tomb a century or so after the Pharaoh's death. Had the inner room been plundered as every other royal tomb discovered in Egypt had been? Did it still contain the mummified body of the King enshrined in the ritual sarcophagus or had the robbers burst the coffin open and scattered the royal remains to the four winds in their mad hunt for gold, as had happened in the case of every other royal tomb discovered? Or did all indications betray and was there merely an empty room behind that blank and unrevealing wall?

A royal sarcophagus with mummy intact, as the priests had laid it away, had never been found in Egypt. But much was known of the splendour in which the Pharaohs were dispatched on their journey to the underworld, with the mummy of the

King swathed in gold plate and decked out with costly gems, and his most valuable possessions buried with him. The possibility that, when the wall was taken down, the dead Pharaoh would be found lying there in state, as, 3,500 years ago, the priests of the royal burial-places had left him, inflamed the imagination of the newspaper public all over the world to the highest extent. 'What does the inner room contain?' became the question of the hour.

Lord Carnarvon, who for a number of years had been carrying out excavation in Egypt as a hobby at his own expense, had sought to shield himself from Press importunity and at the same time to recoup himself in part for the very heavy outlay to which he had been put by disposing of all newspaper and photographic rights in his discovery to *The Times*. It was announced that all further news relating to the tomb would be available only to that journal and that newspapers desiring news or pictures, or both, would have to subscribe to *The Times* Tutankh-Amen service. It was felt very strongly in some quarters that the Egyptian Government had no business to allow a single newspaper to monopolise the news in a matter of acknowledged public interest and several of Reuter's subscribers inquired as to what steps Reuter proposed to take to fulfil its contractual obligations to its subscribers in the matter.

The proposal was that I should go to Luxor and do what I could to provide a news service independent of *The Times*. I would not be alone: the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* were also standing out against the monopoly and had dispatched correspondents to Egypt. The task seemed hopeless. I realised that the crux of the story was what the inner room contained, and I could imagine nothing simpler than to guard the monopoly of a news story which lay at the bottom of a shaft some forty feet underground.

But I accepted. I wanted to see Egypt, and the thought of the Egyptian sun, as I looked at the fog clinging to the windows of my room, determined me. Everybody seemed to be Egypt-bound that season for King Tut had put Luxor right on the front page, and passages were hard to book. But, discover-

ing that Carnarvon was sailing in the *Adriatic*, due to call at Alexandria in the course of a Mediterranean cruise, we pulled some strings and my wife and I boarded the *Adriatic* at Monte Carlo.

I had never met Carnarvon, but I knew his two half-brothers, Aubrey Herbert, who had been with me in the Irish Guards, most whimsical and delightful of companions, and Mervyn Herbert, whom I had met when he was at the British Legation at Lisbon, and at my request Aubrey wired Carnarvon to introduce me. Carnarvon interested me greatly – he impressed me as being the very reincarnation of a certain type of eighteenth-century peer. Unaffected in manner and simple in his mode of life, he had, nevertheless, all the arrogance of his class in his approach to his fellow-man, particularly the Egyptians, whom he frankly despised and was at no pains to conceal it – at Luxor the natives always spoke of him as ‘El Lord’, with respect, with fear, even, but without affection. Highly cultured, with a wide knowledge and appreciation of art, he had the inquiring mind of the dilettante. Spiritualism interested him profoundly. He was the type of nobleman who in another age would have had one of those cabinets of curiosities in which Pepys so delighted.

At one time a prominent racehorse owner, as the result of some dispute with the Jockey Club, he gave up racing and being ordered to live out of England in consequence of a bad motor accident, took up excavation as a hobby at the suggestion of Sir Wallis Budge, the great Egyptologist. Up to the time of the discovery of Tutankh-Amen's tomb, he had been financing various ‘digs’, which Howard Carter conducted on his behalf, for about sixteen years. Howard Carter was one of the most experienced ‘field men’ in Egyptian excavation: he had been at the game for some thirty years.

It was characteristic of Charles Carnarvon that he made a thorough study of Egyptology. He was a fascinating conversationalist on that as on any other subject that interested him. I can see him now as I used to see him as we sat together after dinner in the smoke-room of the *Adriatic*, with his rather sleepy air, his eternal cigarette, which he smoked out of a

quill holder, and the old brown cardigan he wore over his evening waistcoat as a precaution against draughts. His only daughter, Lady Evelyn Herbert (now Lady Evelyn Beauchamp) was with him – the tender friendship between these two was delightful to watch.

Carnarvon was very gracious to me, and even later on at Luxor, when the relations between the excavators and the anti-monopoly Press, as we used to call ourselves, became strained, we remained on speaking terms. But at our first interview on board the *Adriatic* he told me very frankly that I was wasting my time. He did not intend to be bothered with reporters, as he had been ever since the tomb was discovered. Only *The Times* would get the news – if other newspapers wanted it, they could take it from *The Times*.

My experience over the Tutankh-Amen story taught me that no prospect is ever hopeless, or, to put it another way, that the time to give up hope is when you have undergone complete and irremediable defeat. The success or failure of my mission depended on my getting the first news of what lay behind that sealed wall: I had no idea as to how I was to accomplish this, but I decided that I would make all my plans as though I were dealing with a routine news event, where all had an even chance. A first survey of the ground showed me that to get the news away promptly would require considerable organisation. The tomb was near the entrance to the Valley of the Kings, which was a six and a half mile ride on donkey-back over a rough mountain road from the Nile bank. To reach Luxor and the cable office, the Nile had to be crossed by felucca – twenty minutes' sail – to the landing-stage of the Winter Palace Hotel, where we all were staying, and thereafter, it was about a mile to the telegraph office, which was in the native town. The only effective motor-car in the place was a Ford belonging to Carnarvon, in which he used to travel to and from the tomb; but I unearthed an antediluvian flivver in the town, the property of a native, which might or might not be persuaded to go.

For the time being, there was no shortage of news. The ante-chamber of the tomb was full of funerary furnishings and

had to be cleared before the sealed door was tackled, and for weeks on end we watched chariots, chairs, tables, beds and vases being reverently borne out of the tomb, for the first time in 3,500 years, into the brilliant Egyptian sunshine. But the situation between the excavators and the anti-monopolist correspondents was becoming increasingly acute. We had endeavoured to persuade the Egyptian Government to espouse our cause, but without much success. A bitter note crept into the controversy, in which my friend, the late Arthur Weigall, the distinguished author and biographer, who had come out to Luxor for the *Daily Mail*, was prominently to the fore.

At one time Inspector of Antiquities in the service of the Cairo Museum, Weigall had supervised many important excavations at Luxor and elsewhere and held strong views on the question at issue. He took the line that the granting of a monopoly of news in a scientific discovery to an individual newspaper for a financial consideration was a form of commercial exploitation unworthy of the traditions of science and hitherto unknown in the history of excavation, and said so, with all vigour, in his dispatches to the *Mail*. The excavators were much incensed against Weigall, and his strictures led to his being virtually boycotted by the distinguished Egyptologists, some of them personal friends of his, who had come out to work on the tomb and were naturally partisan, a retribution which, I feel bound to say, Arthur bore with his customary smiling philosophy.

Meanwhile Egyptian feeling, always strongly Nationalist, sided whole-heartedly with the anti-monopolists. The Egyptian Cabinet had a healthy respect for 'El Lord'; but the national pride was touched. Although the Ministry declined to interfere with the monopoly, they induced Carnarvon to agree to throw open the tomb once a week to the newspaper men and visitors provided with passes issued by the Department of Antiquities.

The tension between the excavators and their critics was amusingly reflected in the atmosphere of the Winter Palace Hotel, the social centre of Luxor. It was the most brilliant

season Luxor had ever known and at night the large dining-room glittered with the jewels and bare arms of beautiful women from all parts of Europe and America. The hotel was split into two camps. Tourists who were friends of Carnarvon were unwilling to have any traffic with the other side, lest they might be accused of giving secrets away, and I did not blame them, although it diverted me to find people I knew quite well in London passing me by with face averted.

The First Battle of Luxor, we called it.

Little by little, the ante-room of the tomb was emptied and its contents gingerly conveyed to Seti II's Tomb, which Howard Carter had fitted up as a laboratory, for preservative treatment. The moment was nigh when the sealed door would be taken down and the secret of the tomb revealed. We made sure that the excavators were preparing to steal a march on us. Work on the tomb was carried out only in the mornings: at noon the tomb was padlocked and reopened only next day. We organised among ourselves an unobtrusive watch on the tomb to make sure that the excavators did not return after lunch and start opening up the sealed chamber.

One evening, as I was going up in the lift at the hotel, I met Carnarvon. As I have said, notwithstanding the heat and dust of the controversy, our relations had not been severed. I asked him when he proposed to pierce the sealed wall. I had expected an evasive answer, but to my great surprise he replied, 'On Sunday. Lord Allenby and the Queen of the Belgians (who was then visiting Egypt) are coming down from Cairo for it.'

On this I went aside and indulged in a little deductive thinking. There was a rumour that Howard Carter had already removed some of the stones of the sealed entrance for a preliminary peep. But I had visited the tomb every week and closely inspected the roughly plastered wall without detecting any signs that it had been tampered with. Supposing the inner chamber was empty? I could not picture Carnarvon and Howard Carter risking such a pitiable fiasco in the presence of distinguished guests who had made the overnight journey from Cairo. I felt certain that the excavators would make

sure what the inner-room contained before they received these important visitors.

But when would they carry out this preliminary 'look-see'? My conversation with Carnarvon took place on a Monday. My imagination fastened on the following Friday. Friday was the Moslem Sunday: the Cairo ministries were shut on Fridays, thereby eliminating the risk of a 'leak' from Egyptian sources to the anti-monopolist Press. Furthermore, Friday was the day best suited to *The Times* for the most advantageous exploitation of its monopoly. If *The Times* correspondents at Luxor could land their 'scoop', exclusively announcing the discovery of the King's sarcophagus, in Saturday morning's paper, the rest of us would have to wait until Monday to make any announcement, by which time *The Times* would further annihilate us with a flood of supplementary details.

My anti-monopolist colleagues and I having long since decided that the situation demanded we should work on the principle 'United we stand, divided we fall', and pool our resources, I passed this information along to them. We persisted with our watch. Meanwhile, banking on Friday as the day appointed to give the secret to the world, I went ahead with my arrangements, notwithstanding the fact that I could see nothing but defeat in front of me. I put a telephone-call through to my friend Gerald Delany, at Cairo, Reuter's intelligent and resourceful manager in Egypt, and asked him to buy me a Ford and rush it up to me at Luxor right away, together with a chauffeur. Delany explained that it would have to come by rail, as there was no road from Cairo to Luxor; but promised to get the car to me by Wednesday.

The new Ford – it cost £300 – I designated for use between the Valley of the Kings and the river bank. As a supplementary safeguard I arranged with Mahmoud Mansour, my dragoman, to retain the services of six of the fastest donkeys, with their attendant donkey-boys, for the whole of Friday and at the same time to hire a felucca, for the river crossing, for the day. At my suggestion Mahmoud, who thoroughly entered into the spirit of the thing – he was of better class than the rest of the Luxor dragomans, being the son of a well-known antique

dealer in the town – ferreted out the owner of the prehistoric T model Ford I had heard of and set him to work, trying to make the old bus go. I intended to use this car to convey my ‘flash’ from the Nile landing-stage to the cable office. We discovered that the car had only three tyres, but, as Mahmoud airily explained, the owner could easily replace the missing tyre with a piece of rope, adequate for the short journey.

On the Wednesday afternoon I was having a lonely drink on the terrace of the Winter Palace and contemplating the sunset in a decidedly depressed mood when a coal-black negro in a ragged blue suit and a very dirty uniform cap appeared at my elbow and made a long speech to me in Arabic, punctuated by many smiles and salaams. I thought he was a tout and was about to chase him off with the customary ‘Imshi!’ or ‘Yalla!’ when it suddenly dawned upon me that it was my chauffeur from Cairo. I sent for Mahmoud to interpret. My guess was right: my new Ford was at the station.

I was missing from dinner that evening. Under cover of night twenty natives manhandled the car, still in its wrappings, from the railway, levered it on to a felucca, and landed it on the other side of the Nile. There, out of those self-same rushes among which the infant Moses was found, they fashioned a rudimentary garage on the river bank beside the road leading to the Tombs of the Kings, and there, like the mother of Moses concealing her baby, we hid the car.

The entire operation cost fourteen shillings.

Right up to Friday lunch-time the excavators made no move. That morning as usual I rode up to the tomb on my donkey ‘Gazelle’ and sat with my colleagues and the customary troupe of chattering tourists on the wall above, looking down at Howard Carter and his assistants engaged in their wonted activities in and about the tomb. Later in the morning my dragoman arrived. Mahmoud had ridden up in the new Ford and had donned a new and very bright blue gown in honour of the occasion. Taking me aside he informed me that the car was concealed behind a rock a few yards outside the entrance to the Valley, that my donkey-boys were standing by, that the felucca we had engaged was in readiness on our side of the

Nile and that on the farther bank, the indigenous Tin Lizzie, its missing tyre ingeniously replaced by rope, was prepared at any moment to make a record dash for the cable office.

I had in the pocket of my khaki jacket two cables marked for dispatch at urgent (i.e. triple) rates. One read 'Tomb empty', the other 'King's sarcophagus discovered' – I looked at them very often during that interminable morning. And interminable it was. As it dragged its endless length along, the tourists disappeared over the hill to the rest-house at Deir-el-Bahri for lunch, and we were left alone with the excavators. At last it was noon. The excavators filed out, Howard Carter shut the door of the tomb and locked it, the whole party trooped off to lunch, and we had the Valley to ourselves.

There were no preparations to indicate that the sealed wall was to be broken down that day, but we decided to remain. In despondent mood we ate our sandwiches and drank warm beer in the shade beside the tomb of King Horemheb close by. The sandwiches were cold turkey – an American would say an apt choice in the circumstances. Nobody spoke much. We lay back and watched the tiny wax-wings hopping among the stones or the kites wheeling high above the eternal hills, letting the silence, the strange, brooding silence of this place of dead kings, sink in. I have never forgotten that lunch and H.V. Morton, who represented the *Daily Express* at Luxor and is now the best-selling author of the *In Search Of* series, has not forgotten it either.

Towards one o'clock the sound of voices aroused us. The whole party of excavators, headed by Carnarvon, who was accompanied by his daughter together with Monsieur Lacau, the head of the Department of Antiquities, all the Egyptologists assembled at Luxor and a number of important-looking Egyptians in tarbushes, came streaming into the Valley.

It was zero hour.

As the cortège disappeared into the tomb, my spirits sank. They were all pledged to silence, there was no doubt of that. They would pierce the wall, see what there was to be seen on the other side, and emerge again and none except those chosen few and *Times* readers would be a bit the wiser.

Howard Carter's head *Rais* (foreman) had taken pickaxes and shovels into the tomb. Now heavy, thudding sounds as the picks were plied reverberated from the shaft. I glanced at my watch. Two o'clock to 2.30 p.m. (4 to 4.30 p.m. London time) was my dead-line for the London evening papers – thank goodness, the ordeal would soon be over.

The noise of the picks stopped. There was a long, long silence, hard to bear. Suddenly Mahmoud, who stood beside me at the wall above the tomb, whispered excitedly in my ear, 'I think they find something.' Don't ask me how he knew – he was as isolated as I was; but things happen in Egypt that have no reasonable explanation. Anyway, the next moment Carnarvon shot like a rocket out of the dark entrance. He was as pale as death and the sweat was running down his face. With shaking hands he lit a cigarette, took three puffs, flung the cigarette away and strode back into the tomb.

They had found something. But what? It was one of those situations in which the Yellow Press will take a chance and 'jump' the news, because if it's right, it's a scoop, and if it's wrong, to-morrow's another day and it doesn't matter. I was turning the matter over in my mind when I perceived an enormously stout Egyptian waddling out of the tomb. Close at his heels followed one of Howard Carter's men – I imagine to make sure that he did not communicate with us. But, as it immediately proved, the urgency of the Egyptian's exit had nothing to do with us. He removed himself modestly behind a rock to do what he had come to do, seeing which his watchdog forbore to interfere and remained at the foot of the steps at the tomb entrance.

I had only a few minutes to go to my dead-line: it was my last, as it was my only, chance. Keeping out of sight of the tombshaft, I scudded across to where the Egyptian, his purpose achieved, was composedly descending the hillside. I had to think quickly: I summoned to my aid one of the oldest devices of the reporter for getting at facts, the pretence of knowledge.

I addressed the Egyptian in French, because French is the language of polite society in Egypt and I knew it would flatter

him, and I called him 'Excellency' because thereby I implied that he was a Pasha.

'Excellency,' I said, removing my sun helmet with a bow, 'is it true that they have found two sarcophagi?'

'No, no,' replied the fat man importantly in French. 'Only one.'

'Quite plain, they tell me?'

'No, no,' he said again. 'It is magnificently decorated, all blue and gold.'

I was about to risk another question, but now he smelt a rat, and, brushing past me, waddled back to the tomb.

But I had my news flash. Within thirty seconds Mahmoud was away with my message 'King's sarcophagus discovered', all the arrangements I had made functioned like clockwork and Reuter beat the world with the first news that King Tutankh-Amen in truth lay within the shrine. Actually, as I ascertained later, the London and New York evening newspapers were on the streets with the news before the excavators left the tomb and I was told that Lady Carnarvon in London first learned of the crowning of her husband's hopes from my message as published in the *Evening Standard*.

I feel, to complete the story, I should add that my Egyptian benefactor was in reality a Pasha and what is more, Chairman of the Sudan Irrigation Board which, in the circumstances in which I encountered him, I submit is not inappropriate.

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When all the fuss of the discovery was over, and the tomb was about to close for the season, Carnarvon, meeting my wife in the Valley of the Kings one day, said to her, 'I am prohibited by my agreement with *The Times* from allowing journalists to visit the tomb of Seti II, where the articles removed from the tomb are being treated. I therefore cannot invite your husband but, if it would interest you, I should be very happy to show you our laboratory myself.'

It was his chivalrous way of indicating that the part I had played in combating the monopoly had left him with no ill-will towards me, perhaps in recognition of the fact that I had not personally attacked him in my messages from Luxor – such a

course would, in any case, have been outside the scope of an agency service. This happened on the last day Charles Carnarvon was destined to spend in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, which had always possessed such a strange fascination for him and where he had achieved the greatest triumph of his life. That night he returned to Cairo where he was presently smitten with the attack of erysipelas of which he died. About the same time, my wife, who returned with me to Cairo a day or two later, went down with amoebic dysentery and had to be removed to the German Hospital for urgent treatment.

A lot of nonsense has been printed attributing Lord Carnarvon's death to some supernatural agency. The story that he was bitten by a mysterious insect left by the old Egyptian priests in the tomb is ridiculous – when opened these tombs are air-tight and completely sterile. Or was he the victim of poison spread by the priests to guard the tomb from violation. The facts of the case are simple and easily ascertainable. Egypt is an extremely insanitary country: Carnarvon was stung by a gnat on the face, rubbed the place with his fingers and infected it. His blood was in a poor state and his vitality much reduced by the fatigues and excitement of his great discovery, so that septicemia set it. If the superstitious-minded care to attribute to some malign influence the fact that he did not long survive his discovery that is a different matter.

Actually Carnarvon himself was rather superstitious. On the boat going out to Luxor he read me a letter he had received from Cheiro, the palmist, whom I have mentioned before in the course of this narrative.¹ Cheiro told a circumstantial story of how as a young man at Luxor, more than thirty years before, an old sheikh whom he had cured of malaria, had presented him with a mummied hand, assuring him it was the hand of a princess of ancient Egypt, sister-in-law of King Tutankh-Amen.

I forget whether Cheiro explained it, but Tutankh-Amen was the successor of Akhnaton, the 'heretic' king, who forsook the ancient gods for the worship of the sun disc and removed the religious centre of Egypt from Thebes to Tel-el-Amarna:

¹ See pp. 307-8.

Tutankh-Amen married one of Akhnaton's daughters. The sheikh's story, according to Cheiro, was that the princess to whom the hand belonged had revolted against her father, King Akhnaton, and was slain in battle. In order to condemn her to eternal damnation, according to the old Egyptian ideas, the heretic priests cut off her right hand and buried the body in an unknown spot in the Valley of the Kings. Upon the severed hand they laid a solemn curse, predicting that it would be carried to every country of the world, never to be united to the princess's body.

(I might interpolate here that, as far back as 1903, when I first went to Paris, where he was living at the time, I heard of Cheiro's mummied hand, which he kept in his bedroom.)

Cheiro's letter went on to say that, a year or two before, he noticed that the hand had suddenly grown soft. Then blood appeared. A chemist treated it with a preparation of pitch and shellac but without any lasting effect. Cheiro declared he had the sworn deposition of the chemist to this effect. At this time Cheiro, otherwise Count Louis Hamon, was living with his wife in Ireland. In October 1922, owing to the disturbed political situation, they decided to move to England. The mummied hand continuing to ooze blood, they decided to burn it.

This happened on All Hallows Eve (October 31st) when ghosts are reputed to walk in Ireland. While the Countess Hamon recited one of the prayers from the old Egyptian *Book of the Dead* they laid the hand on the drawing-room fire. Suddenly a great wind came up and the doors of the porch were burst violently open. Standing there they saw a slim woman's figure wearing the uraeus, the headdress with the serpent, which was the symbol of royalty among the ancient Egyptians, and a jewelled girdle that sparkled in the firelight. The apparition advanced to the fire, stooped over it, and was gone.

Five days later, on November 5, 1922, *The Times* announced the discovery of Tutankh-Amen's tomb. Cheiro entreated his lordship to have a care.

Carnarvon was rather impressed with this letter.

The death of all manner of people, directly or indirectly associated with the opening of Tutankh-Amen's tomb, regardless of the fact that many of them, like Benedict, head of the Egyptian collection at the Louvre, who was present at the discovery of the Sarcophagus, had attained a respectable age – Benedict was about seventy – have been attributed to the so-called Curse of Tutankh-Amen. My answer is that Howard Carter, who has opened more ancient Egyptian tombs than any living man, is hale and hearty and the same is true of Howard Winlock, for so many years in charge of the American Museum 'dig' at Queen Hatshepsut's temple at Deir-el-Bahri and at present head of the Egyptian department at the Metropolitan Art Museum, New York.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE LONELINESS OF AUTHORSHIP

MY father, who was a great one for tags, was fond of quoting the French saw '*Je prends mon bien où je le trouve*', or, as we would say in English, 'All's fish that comes to my net'. This is exactly the novelist's case. Of necessity. Granted that fiction should hold the mirror up to nature, it becomes instinctive with him to keep eyes and ears open as he passes among his fellow human beings, draining life of its lessons as a field-drain drains the fields and passing his impressions through the filter of his own experience to percolate in a clear stream into that storage tank of unlimited capacity, the subconscious mind.

Like Autolycus, the novelist is a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. His brain is a magpie's nest. H. G. Wells said to me once, 'I can't think why anybody ever wants to meet an author. I think authors are the dullest dogs imaginable. When they are not talking about themselves, they are picking your brain for plots.' Which is a harsh way of expressing the same idea. Arnold Bennett declared that a novelist should never take a holiday. He was right. The novelist is the slave of the subconscious mind. But the subconscious mind, like a cold motor engine, wants warming up before it will run at full strength: you know what a business it is to start a car that has been standing in the garage all the winter.

The novelist cannot afford to let his brain lie fallow. I sometimes think that the saying about poets being born not made is an argument in favour of birth control. But the novelist cannot exercise birth control in respect of his literary creativeness. Like any happily married young matron who

has a baby a year, he should always be either with book or freshly risen from book-bed.

When I first switched from regular journalism to authorship, the loneliness of authorship concerned me almost as much as its economic risks. Hannen Swaffer once confided to me that he would never write a novel because he could not face the prospect of setting down all the 'thes' a full length novel contains. Of course, if an author stopped to consider the physical drudgery of his job, few books would ever be written. Fortunately, in the nature of things, he does not. All he knows is that he has a book in his head: he will not rest until he has got it out of his system.

Nevertheless the loneliness of authorship is rather terrible. The newspaper man has his characters and plot already supplied: the novelist has to evolve these out of his inner consciousness and what is worse, to live sequestered with them for months with none to judge their sufficiency but himself. Authorship exacts an iron self-belief. When one is told, unkindly, that a novelist is 'written out', it does not mean that he has run dry of ideas: it is much more likely that he has lost the implicit self-assurance required to carry him through the long and lonely task of writing a novel. An indispensable ingredient of this self-belief is the faculty for self-criticism, thanks to which a novelist will inexorably destroy, no matter at what expense of time or labour, work that does not come up to his own critical standard. If a prayer had to be written for the novelist it should be, 'Dear God, let me always be the impartial judge of my own work. Amen.'

Journalism provides a good training for authorship. It sharpens the observant faculties, it strengthens the memory, it teaches accuracy. Rudyard Kipling and Arnold Bennett and, in my own line of country, Edgar Wallace, remained newspaper men at heart, and in John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells, with their minute eye for detail, a brace of magnificent reporters was lost to Fleet Street. Kipling, in particular, remained a reporter to the last. To him, more than to any writer I have ever known my father's French tag applied. He went through the world to the day of his death absorbing know-

ledge. Details were his cup of tea. He could apply his magnificent imagination unassisted to situation and plot; but details he liked to gather from the man who could tell him. Not only details of machinery, details of the hundred and one kinds of 'shop' that men talk in the different professions and trades, but also details of sounds, of smells, of sights, which helped to create atmosphere, of which he was a master.

When he wrote the *History of the Irish Guards*, in memory of his son John, who was killed with the regiment, in a letter to me he said, 'I am conscious of having ploughed to some extent with your heifers,' a characteristically generous allusion to my own story of life in the Irish Guards at the front, *The Adventures of an Ensign*, which I had presented to him when it was first published. Once when I was sitting with him at Brown's Hotel, where he always stayed when he came to London, he began to question me about my experiences in Macedonia, in the Balkan War. Out of our talk he proceeded to evolve a short story centring about the figure of a Macedonian Komitaji, a Balkan bandit, which, to my consternation, he insisted that I should write. In his enormous kindness to young writers he subsequently sent me several letters on the subject, elaborating 'our' story, as he called it, in great detail. Ultimately I wrote it, but it was a bitter and rather cruel story and I was not very happy about it. I showed it to an editor or two, but no one would publish it: therefore, I left it and said no more to Kipling on the subject. So it remains in my drawer, following R.K.'s own idea as set forth in his autobiography, of keeping MS. in cold storage. One day I shall take it out and look it over again, and maybe, this time it will get into print.

There are authors – Joseph Conrad was one – in whom the imaginative strain bubbles so strongly that contact with the world of action stultifies rather than inspires them. For these the sylvan solitudes, the country peace. But an author who has known a full life will find himself, willy nilly, always returning to it, to refresh himself and to mitigate the monotony of continuous association with the elusive and shadowy figures amongst whom his creative hours are spent. Especially if his

path has once lain along Fleet Street, where life pulses so strongly. Like any other writer I flee the distractions of the town when I have a troublesome plot to grapple with, or a book to finish against time. But a contemplative existence as background to my daily stint at my desk is not for the likes of me—I have tried it, and I know. I need to have the active world at my door, the brain friction of daily association with people who are making things happen. Even when wrestling with the complicated technique of a crime novel, which requires considerable concentration, I like to write in a city, a world capital for preference, where the leisure hours are as easily and interestingly filled as the working ones.

For establishing the contacts of which I speak journalism is the unparalleled medium, especially for the erstwhile newspaper man. Gladly one seeks relief from the loneliness of authorship in the companionable change of a newspaper article, an occasional assignment. Still my feet carry me, between books, to where world events are stirring—to Burgos, to chat with Franco and his generals; to Oberammergau, for the Passion Play; to Washington, to spend a couple of hours yarn-ing about high politics and crime fiction with the President.

My note-books go with me. Here atmosphere, backgrounds, technical details, pen pictures of people, scraps of dialogue and slang, are jotted down. I turn the pages of some at random and find (*a*) a vignette of Long Island under the snow, (*b*) a note of the uniform of a Lisbon policeman, (*c*) details about the bullion-room on a transatlantic liner, with particulars of its location and where the keys are kept, (*d*) a prayer delivered impromptu by a poor Negro woman at a prayer-meeting in the coloured quarter of Charleston, (*e*) scraps of dialogue in broken English as used by an Egyptian dragoman with half a page of Egyptian invective in its English literal translation, (*f*) a note on the sound of a hurricane screaming across the Baie des Chaleurs in the Province of Quebec.

Such haphazard jottings cover those lapses of memory which never reveal themselves so unerringly as when it comes to putting in those touches which give authenticity to a novel. It is often objected that, where the setting of a story is unfamiliar,

the majority of readers have no means of telling whether it rings true or not. That may be, but authenticity of setting makes for plausibility, and plausibility is the essence of successful adventure stories. Alexandre Dumas Père said, 'Be plausible in your first few chapters, and thereafter you can tell the reader what you like.'

The author of *The Three Musketeers* knew about adventure fiction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EGYPTIAN SHADOW SHOW

I HAVE only to glance at the backs of the twenty-four works of fiction (novels and collections of short stories) I have perpetrated to date (1937) to refresh my memory as to my movements after I had quitted Fleet Street, as I fondly imagined, for good. My writing habits were fairly constant, that is to say, while writing one novel I would find myself making notes for subsequent use wherever I happened to be – after leaving the *Daily Mail* I was almost continuously abroad.

Thus, for example, *Mr. Ramosi*, a yarn about the traffic in stolen Egyptian antikas which I wrote at Cannes (I had a villa there for some years), was based on material I collected on the two trips I made to Egypt (1923 and 1924) in connection with Tutankh-Amen's tomb: *The Key Man*, a Foreign Legion story, was the result of a summer I spent in the Basque country, followed by a tour of the more inaccessible parts of French Morocco in 1925 as Field-Marshal Lyautey's guest: *The Clock Ticks On* and other novels with an American background were inspired by the years I spent in the United States from 1930 on: *Fog*, a tale of homicide on a liner, which I wrote at Deal, New Jersey, in collaboration with Dorothy Sims, wife of Hal Sims, the great American contract bridge authority, reflected the many voyages I have made across the Atlantic, while the background and atmosphere for *Dead Man Manor* I amassed in the course of a motor tour of the remoter parts of the Province of Quebec in the summer of 1933.

I returned to Egypt for Reuter's in October 1923 for the second season's work on the tomb of Tutankh-Amen. The previous season had brought to light the Pharaoh's stupendous blue and gold outer shrine: now this was to be opened in the

confident expectation that, within, enclosed in a series of shrines and coffins, the royal mummy would be found. This time the element of suspense was less marked; but none the less the story was still supremely interesting. Unfortunately on this, my second mission, the scales were weighted more heavily than ever against me.

Our fight in the previous year for the same privileges as those accorded to *The Times* under that journal's arrangement with Lord Carnarvon had had little effect. As correspondent of Reuter's and the Associated Press of America, I represented hundreds of papers and I spent a hectic month in Cairo battling for what I considered my rights. Gerald Delany, Reuter's Cairo manager, who knows everybody who is anybody in Egyptian politics, pulled strings to such good purpose that I was invited to state my case before a special meeting of the Egyptian Cabinet. Deciding that to read a set speech might create a bad impression, I spoke in French without notes for half an hour. I rather enjoyed this tour de force and the Egyptian Prime Minister afterwards congratulated me upon my eloquence! But it was all in vain. They put up a lawyer against me, a gimlet-eyed Italian who quoted international law – as a matter of fact, I realised from the first I was playing a losing game. I finally left for Luxor feeling that I was indeed facing my Waterloo.

While I was in Cairo, not because it has ever been my practice to consult such people but because I am always in search of the picturesque, I persuaded an Egyptian acquaintance of mine to ask his wife to take me to her pet soothsayer. Fortune-tellers are held in high repute even in modern Egypt. No Egyptian would think of undertaking any important step such as opening a new branch of his business or marrying off his daughter without consulting the omens through his favourite soothsayer. One afternoon, then, a shabby victoria called for me at Shepherds, where I was staying, and two lustrous black eyes shot me an enigmatic glance above the regulation black veil as my Egyptian presented me to his spouse, a slim figure in flowing black. We drove to the Arab city, then, leaving the carriage, the three of us set off on foot through a labyrinth of

lanes too narrow for wheeled traffic in a perfect Arabian Nights environment.

Through a dusty courtyard we entered one of those odoriferous and dilapidated dwellings to be met with all through the East, where poultry and even goats wander unconcernedly through the rooms, and Oriental furnishings, mostly in a state of disrepair, contrast oddly with American alarm clocks and Birmingham brass bedsteads – once inside, as the abode of an Eastern magician I found it disappointing. The lady immediately disappeared and we did not see her again until we were leaving; but we passed at once into an inner chamber, furnished with little else than a broad divan with cushions, where presently the fortune-teller joined us.

Rather to my surprise (although I don't really know why one should expect a seer to be old) it was quite a young man, in his early twenties, brown-skinned with very large dark eyes and a simple, pleasing manner – my companion addressed him as 'Sheikh'. He wore a white turban wound about a black skull cap and a handsome gown of pink silk striped with black. He spoke no English. My escort explained to me that I should tie up a piece of silver in the corner of my handkerchief and not expect to see either again. Meanwhile, the sheikh, seated cross-legged on the couch, had lit a bowl of charcoal on which he strewed incense, muttering to himself as he did so. Then taking from me my handkerchief with the coin knotted in the corner, he bent forward and began to sway his body to and fro above the bowl in the dense cloud of smoke from the incense. The smoke eddied about him, the air of the room was filled with its pungent aroma and, as the young man swung his torso, with eyes still closed, his small brown hands tightly clutching my offering, he quickened the movement with rapid, little jerks, his utterance grew faster and he began to gabble – it was evident that he was gradually coming under the influence of some narcotic in the incense.

It really was a remarkable performance. He seemed to take on another voice, another personality. It was no longer the quiet, rather deferential person that had received us, but an eager, highly excitable youth who, with eyes shut throughout,

acted everything he said, fluttering his hands, throwing himself about and varying his voice from a high falsetto to a tone a good octave lower, according to the personage he was representing. I might here remark that at this time it was by no means certain I should be going to Luxor. I had reported fully to Reuter's as to the difficulties awaiting me and I thought it quite likely that in the circumstances I should be recalled. Although my Egyptian friend knew all about the nature of the business that had brought me to Cairo, he assured me that neither he nor his wife had told the sheikh anything about me. In any event, neither of them can have informed the soothsayer that I was shortly leaving for Luxor for, as I have said, at that time I did not know it myself.

As the youth raved on in Arabic, my escort translated. I quickly comprehended that the soothsayer was not telling me my fortune, but was reading the immediate future, as though, like one of his Egyptian clients, I had come to consult him about some present difficulty. After a lot of vague stuff about a fat man who rode in a big motor-car and was telephoning to someone about me (the sheikh acted all this, blowing out his cheeks and lolling back among his cushions in an Oriental conception of a person in authority) and about a dark man who was working against me (I failed to identify either of these) and about all the money I was going to make (still to materialise), he said that very soon, maybe in two or three days, I should be going to 'the place of the dead'.

This clear allusion to the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings did not escape my companion and he drew my attention to it. I was anxious and depressed at present, the sheikh went on to say, but my fears were groundless. I did not know it now, but after I had reached the place where I was going, I should find that everything would come right. This ended the séance which had lasted perhaps a quarter of an hour. The sheikh stopped speaking, then presently opened his eyes like someone awaking from sleep, and, coming out of his trance, proceeded to write me an amulet. This consisted of a sheet of white foolscap which he covered with cabalistic signs and folded into a small wad which he tied up with white thread,

bidding me never to open it and to keep it always with me (I carried it on me for years until it fell to pieces). I paid him for the amulet what the interpreter indicated, the equivalent of a few shillings, and we took our leave.

Three days later having cabled London the news of my unsuccessful appeal to the Cabinet, I received a telegram bidding me, nevertheless, to proceed to Luxor immediately and I left the same night. And, as the sheikh had further predicted, after I had installed myself at Luxor, I found myself relieved of the major part of my worries. For although all the work of taking down the outer and inner shrines, disclosing the actual sarcophagus containing the great golden mummy case, went forward in the depths of the tomb and, save for occasional news bulletins and a weekly Press visit, in complete secrecy as far as the anti-monopoly newspapers were concerned, I yet managed to keep Reuter's and the A.P. promptly informed of each of the more important finds as they were made—the opening of the mummy case was deferred until the following season.

How this was achieved is a strange story and I do not feel that the time has yet come when it can be told. But let me say that I should have laughed to scorn anyone who would have suggested to me while I was in Cairo that such a result was possible, especially in the circumstances in which it was achieved. Yet the young sheikh foresaw it.

As I have remarked before, curious things happen in Egypt.

That winter at Luxor, in a number of visits to the tomb, I saw in succession the outer shrine opened, revealing in succession three other wooden shrines, each vying with the other in magnificence, the last of which enclosed the lovely yellow quartzite sarcophagus containing the royal mummy. I shall not easily forget the sense of emotion with which I gazed bare-headed (I always took off my sun helmet on entering the tomb) upon the wonderful golden anthropoid (i.e. man-shaped) coffin, which the raising of the lid of the sarcophagus exposed to view. Unlike any other mummy case I have ever seen, the head and hands of the King were in the round, moulded in sheet gold. They had used dull gold for the face and hands

and this, combined with the glassy stare of the eyes – they were of aragonite and obsidian – lent the features the greyness of death: it was as though a golden god lay dead there. The whole Tutankh-Amen story, unfolded as it was in the brilliant sunlight and crystal clear air of Upper Egypt, was intensely glamorous and enthralling in its every stage. I only regret that I was not able to return for the third season's work when Howard Carter and his aides, crowning a feat immortal in the annals of Egyptology, gazed upon the dazzling golden mask of the Boy King which concealed the actual mummy. Howard Carter has done full justice to the story in his two splendid books¹ and visitors to Egypt may see at the Cairo Museum displayed in their full magnificence the rich and variegated treasures buried with the young Pharaoh to give him the solace of home surroundings on his dark and terrible journey to the Underworld – the actual mummy reposes in the tomb where it was found.

As Howard Carter does not allude to it in his book, I might mention one of several human touches which came to light in the course of this historic excavation. The outer coffin was so huge and the burial-chamber so small that it was evident that the various shrines must have been brought in in sections. Each section of these wooden shrines had a distinguishing mark, a hieroglyph, to show where it was to be joined to the corresponding section fitted with an identical symbol, the way crates are still put together. In the case of the outer shrine, as one of the distinguished Egyptologists helping Howard Carter in the reading of the ancient Egyptian script told me, someone, presumably a workman, had added a few scratches with a pointed instrument to the identifying hieroglyph, thereby giving it an obscene punning meaning – in fact, he had scrawled a dirty joke on the royal shrine such as to this day a certain type of human being will scrawl on any blank space.

On my second visit to Luxor I had more leisure than in the preceding year. I employed it by visiting in turn every tomb of note in the Valley of the Kings and the adjacent Valley of

¹ *The Tomb of Tutankh-Amen*, by Howard Carter. Two volumes. (Cassell and Co.)

the Queens, including a number of tombs not open to the public through the good offices of my friend Engelbach, at that time Director of Antiquities for Upper Egypt. Terence Gray, who afterwards built the remarkable Festival Theatre at Cambridge and did some notable productions there, often accompanied us on these expeditions—he is an enthusiastic amateur Egyptologist. Some of the tombs we visited were closed because of their dangerous state of disrepair and to reach certain of them we had to be lowered, somewhat perilously, by ropes. On plunging into the Stygian blackness of the shafts leading to such places, with clouds of bats brushing our faces and the roof in imminent danger of coming down over our heads, Engelbach would thoughtfully leave a *gafir*, one of the watchmen of the Department of Antiquities on guard at the entrance, ready to summon help just in case we were entombed.

In order to inspect a tomb recently unearthed by a French excavation party working in the Valley of the Queens, we had to crawl through a sort of hole piled many feet deep with the mummies of Egyptians buried there in the days of the Ptolemies. This involved dragging ourselves along over a regular carpet of mummies. I have never forgotten the atmosphere of that airless, stifling chamber permeated with the sickly-sweet, aromatic fragrance of those hundreds of desiccated bodies crumbling into dust as we went forward. The excavators were much excited by the discovery that a fish figured in the mural decoration of the mortuary chamber, pointing out that it pre-dated the fish, the emblem of Christ, which figures so prominently in the Christian catacombs in Rome.

Dr. (now Sir) Robert Mond, the late Lord Melchett's brother, was excavating at Qurna among the tombs of the Nobles. He used to invite me to the delightful dinners he gave under the moon at the scene of his 'dig', the food and wine being brought across the Nile on donkey back from the Winter Palace Hotel at Luxor. Among the many valuable finds he made were the mummies of a high priest and his wife. When the wife's mummy case was opened, the wife's clothing was found neatly folded on top of the mummy. A young

French girl, who was acting as draughtswoman to the excavators, slipped the robes on, at which the gang of native diggers standing about burst into loud cries of 'Ya salaam!' and similar ejaculations of astonishment. They explained that the robes, a short tunic with a hooded cloak over it, were almost identical with the dress worn by the women of the *fellahin*, the Egyptian natives, to this day.

When I was in Cairo I spent a morning in the laboratory of Dr. Douglas Derry, the very genial Irishman who was Professor of Anatomy at the Kasr el Aini Hospital. Dr. Derry made a hobby of the medical examination of mummies – it was he who made the first incision in the wrappings of Tutankh-Amen's mummy and wrote the medical report on the remains which is published in Howard Carter's book – and there were mummied heads and mummied hands and mummies in boxes all over his rooms. He told me a curious story about the mummy of an Egyptian noble sent up to him by Howard Winlock, head of the Metropolitan Art Museum 'dig', who performed such invaluable work in clearing the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Dair el Bahri (near the Valley of the Kings at Luxor). When Derry unwrapped the mummy one of the feet came off in his hand. Since the wrapping had clearly not been tampered with, there could not be any question of an accident, so he examined the foot more closely and found that the bone was virtually eaten away. Much puzzled he submitted the bone to an eminent London surgeon of his acquaintance without disclosing the fact that it belonged to a mummy several thousand years old and asked him to diagnose the cause of death. The answer came promptly back, syphilis, a disease which, as far as is known, did not appear in the Old World until the Middle Ages – the Spaniards are supposed to have brought it back with them from Central America. Derry ultimately reached the conclusion that the victim had suffered from a form of 'yaws', an obscure tropical disease still common among the natives of Central America which, according to one popular theory, when communicated to Europeans in the persons of Cortez's companions, took the form of syphilis.

The percentage of crimes of violence is higher among the Egyptians, I believe, than any other people. Dr. Sydney Smith, now Regius Professor of Forensic medicine at Edinburgh University, was principal medico-legal expert to the Egyptian Government at this time. White arsenic, extensively used in agriculture in Egypt, is the commonest means adopted by the revengeful fellah to redress his wrongs, and Dr. Smith had no fewer than six stomachs merrily boiling as they underwent the test for arsenic, the day I visited his laboratory. A considerable section of the Cairo police museum is devoted to the innumerable tricks employed by the Egyptians for the smuggling of narcotics, chiefly hashish (mostly in the form of cigarettes) and cocaine. The League of Nations now occupies itself with the combating of this traffic and the annual report to the League made by Russell Pasha, head of the Cairo police, is a fascinating document, as good as any 'thriller'.

I have met some brave men in my time, but Russell Pasha has a brand of courage that I rate very high. When I was in Cairo in 1923 the Nationalist agitation was in full swing and assassination was rife. Scarcely a week passed but some British official was murdered, usually by an unseen hand, and the city flamed with orange posters offering rewards, sometimes as high as £10,000, for the apprehension of the authors of these outrages. One night Russell Pasha invited me to dine with him at his house and after dinner to accompany him on a round of inspection of the Fish Market, Cairo's notorious 'Wasa', to give it its native name, where many hundreds of licensed women ply their trade.

The Wasa occupies an entire section of the town. It is a city, a city of infamy, within a city. Hundreds of women, of all kinds, European as well as Egyptian, white, brown and black, are to be found there, in large, noisy brothels with music and dancing, but also in unspeakable subterranean hovels – it is a matter of price. The Wasa is the breeding-ground of crime, the haunt of the white-slaver, the pimp, the drug-pedlar and the cut-purse, and brawls, and even murders, are of frequent occurrence. Large placards strung across all streets leading

into the Wasa proclaim that it is out of bounds for British troops.

A loaded shot-gun was placed handy on two brackets in the back of the open police car that took us to the Fish Market. I don't know whether my companion had a pistol in his pocket but, when we left the car and dived into a maze of streets, bright with light and loud with the jangle of automatic pianos, the only weapon he carried in view was a stout ash-plant – and this at a time when his life was not worth a moment's purchase, if they could have caught him off his guard. But he had a fine contempt for the readiness of the clandestine assassin to attack the arm of the law: his very nonchalance towards the risks he ran day and night seemed to overawe the Egyptian. At any rate when, in the very heart of the Fish Market, we came upon a solitary and rather scared Gypsie police-constable surrounded by a noisy and hostile crowd of rag-tag and bob-tail natives, Russell Pasha, without a moment's hesitation, sailed into the midst of them, hitting at every tarbush he could see. The group melted like magic whereupon the Chief of Police emerged, dragging by the collar a delinquent whom he handed over to the policeman, and we resumed our stroll.

I felt extremely chilly along the spine: I made sure we were going to have our throats cut.

One of the strangest figures of the Wasa at that time was one El Gharbi who kept the largest and most important house of prostitution. He was an enormous man, well over six feet in height and broad in proportion, but fat and flaccid, the eunuchoid type, who invariably dressed as a woman. His establishment had a large inner courtyard with a bench running all round. Here idlers sat all night drinking coffee or spirits and exchanging badinage with the girls who darted from group to group, making the air shrill with their chatter and laughter, and there was a band of musicians, with native singing and dancing. In the midst of all this hubbub we found El Gharbi, a grave, white-robed figure who, with his hands covered with rings, sat by himself against the wall drinking coffee. He greeted the Chief of Police with dignity but without effusion and in a soft and flutey voice offered us coffee,

which my companion declined. Russell told me afterwards that El Gharbi was beyond question one of the heads of the Egyptian drug traffic and that for years they had been trying to get him but without success for lack of evidence. A good while later I read in a copy of the *Egyptian Mail* which chanced to fall into my hands that nemesis had at last overtaken El Gharbi and that he had received a long jail sentence for drug-trafficking.

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The following year North Africa called me again. My wife and I were preparing for a winter holiday at St. Moritz when unexpectedly the *Continental Daily Mail* wired me to ask whether I would go to French Morocco for them. Rumours of unrest in Morocco were adversely affecting the tourist traffic which had been very efficiently organised by the great French shipping line, the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, colloquially known as 'la Transat.', and the Company was willing to arrange a comprehensive tour for me.

My wife and I had been separated for several months during which I had been away on an exhausting trip to the United States. We had been looking forward to this Swiss holiday and, indeed, had purchased elaborate winter sports outfits – moreover, I was dead tired, my head seething with my impressions of my first visit to America, and I was counting on a few weeks of mountain sunshine to enable me to sort them out and at the same time to arrange in my mind an idea I had for a novel. I telegraphed back to W. L. Warden, managing editor of the *C.D.M.* and a very old friend – we had worked together in Paris before the War – explaining the circumstances. Promptly the reply came back: the Transat. would be very happy to include madame in their invitation, all expenses paid.

I looked at my wife. 'You can't get away from them, can you?' she observed ruefully. 'It's a new country for both of us,' I pointed out. 'But what about my new ski suit, my ski boots, all these things we have both been buying?' she demanded. 'We'll dump 'em!' I told her.

Fleet Street had won again. We dumped them.

CHAPTER XXIX

WE DINE WITH THE MOORS

WE sailed from Bordeaux for Casablanca. This was in January 1925. I counted on being absent for a few weeks only: but, as it turned out, we were away until May. The Transat. has covered the whole of French North Africa with an elaborate network of hotels, ranging from first-class modern hotels like the Mamounia at Marrakesh to desert camps, connected by excellent motor-coach services, and in the upshot our tour of Morocco was extended to take in the entire system, right through Algeria and across the Southern Tunisian desert and Tunisia to Tunis.

It was only on landing at Casablanca that we discovered we were to be the guests of Field-Marshal Lyautey, the French Resident General. An A.D.C. awaited us with a bouquet for my wife and a Government motor-car: Customs formalities were waived and we were whirled off to the leading hotel. Our escort explained that the Field-Marshal would be at Casablanca (his official residence was at Rabat, the administrative capital) next day to see me.

With some trepidation I went next afternoon to my audience with the maker of modern Morocco. The late Field-Marshal Lyautey was the Cromer and Kitchener combined of French Africa. After a lifetime spent as a soldier in the French colonial service – in Madagascar, Cochin China and Algeria – he found himself entrusted with the practical realisation of the French Protectorate over Morocco. By temperament he was exactly suited to the task. A Catholic, a Royalist, a feudalist and a great soldier, he was able to carry through with astonishing success the immense task of modernising the Moorish Empire, rapidly decaying through fanaticism and misrule, not

only through his thorough understanding of the Moslem character but also his appreciation of the strong conservative strain running through every institution in the country. Education, sanitation, pacification, was his programme; but it was a programme based on the principle that the life of the people should be interfered with as little as possible.

Religion was respected. In Algeria, where the inhabitants are more liberal-minded, Christians are allowed to visit the mosques. Not so in Morocco. When as the highest tribute they could pay to the loyalty and devotion with which he had served Morocco the religious authorities at Fez invited the Field-Marshal to enter the far-famed Mosque of Mulai Idriss, which no Christian foot has ever trod, Lyautey expressed his appreciation of the compliment but declined. In his care for the preservation and restoration of the historic monuments of Morocco, in the schools he opened for the fostering and development of such ancient Moorish crafts as leather-working, weaving and rug-making, he showed himself to be more mindful of the traditions and interests of the ancient Moorish Kingdom than the Moors themselves.

In initiating his widespread scheme of reforms his policy was ever to conserve rather than to destroy. While patiently pacifying great regions of the country where the Sultan's writ had never run, he was careful to circumscribe as little as possible the power of the great Atlas chiefs, like the Glaoui, Pasha of Marrakesh, who to this day, unchecked by the French, continue to exercise, as vassals of the Sultan, the power of life and death over their subject tribesmen. The World War was the supreme test of Lyautey's work in Morocco. There were risings fomented by German gold, but even with the denuded strength at his command the Field-Marshal contrived to maintain the upper hand and eventually was able to detach Moorish troops to fight in France.

His was a personal, autocratic rule. After lunch at the Residency at Rabat one day—that gleaming white palace which must be the finest building of its kind in Africa—as I was smoking a cigar with him in his study, he said to me, 'I am a Royalist and there is my King!' And he pointed to the picture

of the Sultan hung above his desk. The influence of Lyautey's strong personality was visible throughout the country, as I discovered on my tour. The many splendid buildings with which he endowed Morocco—the new port of Casablanca, the new administrative capital of Rabat—remain perpetual monuments to his greatness. Lyautey is dead now and time alone will show how much of his work will survive. It will scarcely endure if, as certain signs seem to indicate, the corruption and intrigue of the Palais Bourbon are to take foot in Morocco, as has happened in the case of other French overseas dominions, and the greatest administrative post in France's colonial empire is allowed to become the pawn of French domestic politics.

While I was in Morocco someone gave me a copy of a brilliant pen picture of Lyautey, the work of one of his staff, done in the characteristic manner of the memoirs of Saint-Simon, the eighteenth-century biographer and historian. The flavour of the parody loses something in translation, but I feel it is worth quoting. Disguising its butt under the transparent pseudonym of 'Lieuvín de Hautevue', it reads in English:

'Lieuvín de Hautevue, Marshal of Camps to the King, His Most Christian Majesty's Governor of the Marches of Barbary, pupil of the celebrated Marshal de Gallibray¹ whom he served in the islands, lending him puissant aid for the gaining of honour and reputation.

'Commanded a cavalry regiment without unduly exerting himself.

'Is apt at choosing men and lets them choose his horses; wears out the ones at his side and the others under him.

'Dry and sparkling as a flint to strike fire, he is as quick and bubbling as the wine of his Moselle slopes.

'Wise in his generation, in our King's old age he perceived that the favour of the lowly, even of the rabble, was not to be contemned and in wooing it, proved himself one who, without rumpling his lace, is ever sure of cleansing the hands he touches without soiling his finger-nails, displaying in this art a smiling good-will so faintly mixed

¹ i.e. Galliéni, under whom Lyautey served in Madagascar.

with raillery, that it is as little discernible as it is rare and admirable.

'Beloved of his officers, the soldiery, the gentry of the Court, pen and ante-chamber, he loves women, a pretty face, flattery, work by way of a change, the diligent because they serve him, the frivolous because they amuse him, action because it is necessary to him and high ambitions because he feels that he is worthy of them.

'A little deaf of one ear, of mien high and youthful, he listens while men talk without they notice it, contemplates things and people with an eye quick and clear, judges speedily and sometimes justly.

'He lacks time to be modest: money of the Marshal stamp, it is to be wished our King never minted worse.'

This was the man who received me that January afternoon at the Residency at Casablanca. He wore a plain pale-blue *vareuse*, unadorned save for the Marshal's gold stars on the sleeve. The rugged face was full of restless energy, with its hawk-like nose and grizzled hair *en brosse*—he had the look of an eagle. As he spoke I became aware that he had a finger on every pulse of activity in the country. He took me rather aback by asking point-blank what I wished to see. Now I had taken the precaution of reading on the boat the admirable studies of modern Morocco by the brothers Jerome and Jean Tharaud and everything else about the country I could lay my hands on; but I was still conscious of considerable ignorance on the subject—I felt like telling the Field-Marshal, like a Minister in the House of Commons, that I must have notice of the question.

But even in our short interview it had not escaped me that the Marshal was a person of lightning decisions and not to be temporised with. He had told me I should go anywhere and see anything I wanted: he was so obviously the one man who could make this ample permission good that I resolved to avail myself of it instantly. Summoning to my aid all I had absorbed about the historic land of the Moors, I replied at random that I should like to visit the great Pashas of the Atlas and also see something of the work of the military in the paci-



FIELD MARSHAL LYAUTEY ON RINALDO

fication of the dissident tribes. The Field-Marshal nodded curtly. '*Je vous ferai voir tout ça!*' he promised.

He was as good as his word. In a Staff car with a military driver, most assiduously looked after by the gay and charming young aide who had met us at the boat, we travelled South, beyond Marrakesh, into the far Sous which at that time was still closed to tourists. We went as far as Agadir, whose deep harbour, swarming with all kinds of fish and surmounted by an ancient fort erected by the Portuguese, reminded me of Cowes—little did I think, fourteen years before, when from Berlin I was reporting the different phases of the Agadir crisis, that one day I should look upon that very roadstead where the *Panther* had lain.

On this trip we stopped for lunch one day at Tiznit, a typical Saharan walled town where long caravans of camels led by blue-robed negroes come padding up from the Sudan. The officers of the garrison entertained us to lunch at their mess and after lunch the Colonel said to me delicately, 'Is madame broad-minded?' It then appeared that he wanted to show us one of the curiosities of the place, the *quartier réserve*, which the French maintained for the benefit of the caravans coming up from the South. My madame raising no objection, we were conducted to an enclosure of miserable mud hovels outside the gates where, on our approach, a convey of tiny little Chleu women, with blue tribal marks on their faces, came scuttling from the huts. After much whispering and giggling, one of them came forward and shyly offered my wife some brightly coloured bead bracelets which they had worked themselves, a gift which, at the prompting of the interpreter, I acknowledged by a small money present. My wife sometimes wears these bracelets in evening dress: I never see them without thinking of the African light o' loves who gave them to her.

At another of these stages on our route, we halted to pay our respects to a relative—a brother, I think—of the reigning Sultan who, involved in some conspiracy had been permanently relegated to this obscure corner of the Sous to live. He was very gracious and gave us lunch. I remember the meal

more particularly because at the end of it two enormous animals as big as wolves and trailing silver chains from their collars came bounding into the circle where we sat over our mint tea. They were a brace of hyenas which His Highness kept as pets, horrible, snarling brutes with breath like a blast from a charnel house. These engaging creatures, it was explained to me, will not touch meat unless it is putrid: their attendants were in the habit of burying for several days the food intended for them.

Marrakesh fascinated me. Like Darjeeling, it is the metropolis of the hill country and every day the tribesmen stream down from the Atlas mountains, whose snow-capped crests look down in a circle upon the city, to market or to wander hand in hand through the Souks. I could have spent days on the great square grimly known as the Djemaa el Fna, or Place of the Dead, because in former times it was the scene of executions, of hangings, of decapitations, of men sawn in two, of the lopping off of limbs, where the whole town now gathers in the afternoons to be entertained by snake charmers, conjurers, Chleu dancing boys from the hills with painted faces, and story-tellers. My colleagues, the story-tellers, interested me particularly. Mostly of grave and venerable mien, sometimes wearing the green turban of the Mecca pilgrimage, they squatted cross-legged on the ground, the centre of a rapt throng, and spun old tales whose roots ran back into the dim jungle of time, even to Persia and Hindostan. Some of them had a little tambourine or a boy with a bagpipe with which to summon their audiences. The Arabian Nights was one of their favourite sources, but also the story of the fall of Constantinople, and tales of the Crusades. When the story-teller reached a good 'curtain' in his narrative, he would break off and his assistant would take up a collection among the audience. If the harvest of infinitesimal copper coins did not come up to expectations, the audience would have to wait to hear what happened to Sinbad or Ali Baba while the collector went round again.

At Marrakesh the Field-Marshal's aide who accompanied us got himself into serious hot water by staging for our benefit

one of the most amusing parties I have ever attended. One of the principal buildings of the city is the Palace of the Bahia, built at the turn of the present century by Ba Ahmed, the Grand Vizier, who was virtual ruler of Morocco during the youth of the Sultan Abdul Aziz. The palace was used only on the occasion of the Resident General's rather rare visits to Marrakesh, but was otherwise unoccupied. Our A.D.C. decided that we would have a party in the Bahia, a sort of indoor picnic, and, like Phil the Flutter, hastily dispatched invitations to 'the neighbours one and all', that is to say to the officers of the garrison and of the local Intelligence service (Bureau des Renseignements) and their wives. As the result of much telephoning it was arranged that the bachelors would each bring a bottle, the married folk the food, and a gramophone was bespoke. At the last moment an unforeseen emergency arose. There were no lighting arrangements of any kind in the Palace. I volunteered to provide the light and taking the car, made a round of the shops in the European quarter and of the Souks buying up every candle I could lay my hands on.

Ba Ahmed was a frenzied builder and the Bahia is a vast rambling place, lavishly decorated, consisting of a series of open courtyards, large and small, with rooms giving off them – there must have been a score of these courts. Half an hour before the time fixed for the party, the Marshal's aide and I laid a train of lighted candles from the main entrance through a maze of courts and connecting passages to the suite of rooms we had selected for our little 'do'. It was February and the winter nights at Marrakesh, with the snowy Atlas mountains all about, are bitterly cold: our choice fell on this particular suite because it had a large fireplace where the Moorish gendarmes in charge of the building, who were thrilled to the marrow by these preparations, had kindled a roaring fire.

Well, the party went with a bang. The French love fun, especially of the unexpected order, and they have a genius for improvisation. All the women put on their best Paris evening frocks and it was strange to see them tripping in a merry *cortège*, through the ghostly patios lit by our guttering candle trail, followed by husbands and orderlies bearing

hampers of provisions. Except for my wife and me everybody there was French – they were so light-hearted and gay, it was a pleasure to see them. The atmosphere in the ramshackle building was so cold that we could see our breath, and the draughts were unbelievable. But nobody seemed to mind. We danced to the gramophone, and threw cedar logs on the fire, and ate sandwiches, and jelly, and cold chicken, and drank champagne. It was a jolly party because its originator had deliberately planned it as a ‘young’ party, something away from the ordinary round of rather prim official entertainment at a French military post. There the trouble arose. The wives of some of the ‘higher ups’ in the garrison were much affronted at not receiving an invitation and complained to their spouses with the result that our young friend, I am afraid, was severely rapped over the knuckles at headquarters.

The great Pashas of the Atlas entertained us royally. We went to many Moorish meals where we sat on the floor cross-legged about a low table on which an unending series of courses served on immense brass trays covered with straw ‘cosies’ shaped like witches’ hats would be set. There were no knives or forks: we ate with our fingers, using the first finger and thumb of the right hand, as politeness among the Moors prescribes, and never the left hand, to do which is a grave breach of decorum. Following the lead of the host we would all plunge our hands into the dish, tearing at a lamb roasted whole on a bed of rice or half a dozen chickens stewed with prunes and olives, wiping our fingers between each course on pieces of bread. It is customary for the host to offer a titbit from time to time to the principal guest and at one of these dinners my wife was horrified when the grave Moor who was entertaining us, after scrabbling with his fingers among a lamb served whole which formed the *pièce de résistance* of the repast, dug out one of the eyes which he handed smilingly to her. The French Intelligence officer who was our interpreter gallantly came to her rescue, distracting our host’s attention while my wife slipped the gruesome titbit under the table edge.

Moorish food is delicious. It is cooked over a slow fire for hours and the women of the household who prepare it will

start work as early as three in the morning on a repast to be served at noon. The lamb, the chickens and the pigeons which form the bulk of Moorish menus are as tender as butter as served at these feasts and the pastry, a great speciality, is as light as air and delicious. The Moors, who are prodigious eaters, never drink with their meals but consume large quantities of much sweetened mint tea after. Mint tea is highly digestive. I found that by following the local custom I could eat my way through one of their huge spreads with impunity; but if I took a glass of wine, sometimes served as a compliment to us non-Moslems, I felt cramped to bursting on leaving the table. When we were lunching with the Pasha of Salé, the port of Rabat, my wife asked whether she could have her mint tea without sugar. This request, when translated for our host's benefit, filled him with mirth. Chuckling hugely he explained that the last person to make such an odd request had been the King of the Belgians who was recently his guest. I never discovered why the incident amused the Pasha so much. After food, slaves, wearing a silver ring in one ear as a badge of their servitude, took round a silver ewer and basin to each guest and we washed our hands: often this ceremony was followed by another in which we were sprinkled with rose water and our clothing perfumed by a smoking bowl of incense set at our feet.

I was greatly interested to meet the Glaoui, Pasha of Marrakesh, wealthiest and most powerful of all the Atlas chieftains, at his vast palace at Marrakesh where there were said to be 800 persons alone living in the women's quarters. This grand seigneur with his rather feline air combines in remarkable fashion the medieval condottiere and the modern business man. A mighty fighter in his day, a true son of the Atlas who boasts of wearing only stuffs woven for him by his native tribeswomen and maintains a troubadour to play Chleu songs for him on his lute, pitiless lord of life and death over thousands of savage hillmen, he has a passion for expensive automobiles, fire-arms and all the refinements of Western European civilisation. An excellent business man, he is said to have added to an already enormous private fortune by

adroitly availing himself of the boom in land prices since the French took over the country. Nowadays the Glaoui, like one of our Indian rajahs, has become a familiar figure in European dress on the Paris scene, but in Lyautey's day his propensities in this direction were considerably curbed. The Field-Marshal told me himself that he did not mind what the Glaoui did with his money, as long as he did not overspend his income, but, that his consistent extravagance invariably meant increased rapacity on the part of the collectors of the Pasha's revenues and stimulated unrest among the tribes, thereby menacing the whole French position in Morocco.

I gathered that there had been a tussle between the Resident General and the Glaoui on this subject shortly before we came to Marrakesh which reflected itself amusingly in the manner of the Pasha's welcome. For whereas the other great chieftains like the M'Tougui, a merry, red-nosed, old gent, a regular Old King Cole, who at the age of eighty or so was currently reported to have taken to himself a new sixteen-year-old wife, or the Goundafi, a reverend signor with long, white beard, tendered us the most lavish banquets, the Glaoui contented himself with offering us a modest glass of mint tea. Moreover, although he knows French quite well, he condescended to speak only through the French Intelligence officer who served as interpreter, confining himself to questions of a general order regarding the Field-Marshal which, while proffered in the most honeyed tones, were delicately barbed as by one who had complete command of the fine Oriental art of ambiguous allusion. That Frenchman was a fine blade — one did not have to know Arabic to perceive how adroitly he fenced with the disgruntled Pasha.

Even more than these glimpses of the state in which the Atlas chieftains lived I enjoyed a visit we paid to a less important tribal head who inhabited a tumbledown castle perched like an eyrie in the wild mountain country outside Marrakesh. We shared simple country food with him in a hall with a row of open bays, through which the wind piped freezingly, commanding a stupendous view. Our host, a dour old party in a brown burnous of rough homespun frieze, invited my wife and

a Frenchwoman who was in our party to visit the women's quarters, where the Pasha's oldest wife, who was childless, and the youngest, who had given birth to a son and was therefore the favourite and decked out in surprisingly fine diamonds, received them. Mint tea and sweetmeats were served in a large, squalid room where a gigantic and very bright brass bedstead and a tinkly upright piano with player attachment (it must have been a job to get that piano up those hills!) were the *pièces de résistance* and the walls were incongruously decorated with a collection of clocks, Oriental draperies and a sewing-machine advertisement. Suitably pressed and with much refinement one of the house slaves, a coal-black negress, played the overture from *Tannhäuser* on the pianola for the delectation of the visitors.

Mutatis mutandis, seeing these feudal lords in their homes, I felt that the chieftains in the remoter parts of the Scottish Highlands in the eighteenth century, such as those whom Dr. Johnson and the faithful Boswell visited on their famous tour of the Hebrides, must have lived in much the same way as did the Pashas of the Atlas. There were the same enormous, ramshackle castles and 'fortalice dwellings', the same hordes of relations and retainers receiving board and lodging in return for waiting on the head of the clan. At the banquets given in our honour each course as it left the Pasha's table was borne to an adjoining room where the principal retainers (usually with our military chauffeur as guest of honour) were simultaneously dining, what was left there went to the women's quarters, while the fragments remaining over after the harem had been served fell to the lot of the scullions, the house dogs and the hordes of beggars permanently stationed at the gate.

At Azemmur, one of those much-decayed little Moorish coastal towns which in the Middle Ages carried most of the trade between the Moorish Empire and the ports of Western Europe, we found in the Pasha a splendid type of Moorish country gentleman. Over six feet in height and strikingly handsome in his flowing white robes, in complexion he was much lighter than many Spaniards and looked in the very pink of physical condition. A retired cavalry general, veteran of

many wars against the Chleu tribesmen, this Moorish Squire Western had a passion for horses and, like any ex-cavalry general living in the shires, insisted on showing us his stables before lunch. His horses, especially the stallions, were magnificent, with coats shining like the old London fire-horses – the General confided to us that, to obtain this effect, they were regularly fed on fresh butter. He was daily in the saddle, he told us – one of his favourite pastimes was jackal-hunting, the jackals being ridden down and struck over the head at full speed with a sort of polo stick. A 'strong Churchman' (in the Moslem fashion), a benevolent Governor and an admirable landlord who took an active interest in agriculture, he would have made an excellent Tory M.P.

From Marrakesh we motored to Meknez, once the capital of the Moorish Empire. Meknez is a characteristic example of the building mania which, inspired by Louis XIV and his Château of Versailles, seemed to befall monarchs great and small everywhere in the eighteenth century. I who have seen miniature replicas of Versailles in Germany, Austria, Spain and Russia, not to mention Holland and Scandinavia among other countries, have often wondered what the squandermania of the Roi Soleil must have cost the unfortunate taxpayers of the world in hard cash. Mulay Ismail, the half-crazed barbarian who became Sultan of Morocco in 1673, resolved in his turn to emulate the example of the great French sovereign. It was in the heyday of the Barbary pirates and the Moorish raiders operating from Salé, the port of Rabat, supplied the monarch with an almost unlimited supply of free labour in the shape of the Christian captives they brought back from their forays. With the aid of between 50,000 and 60,000 Moorish and Christian prisoners Mulay Ismail built the prodigious palace with its adjacent pleasure gardens and arsenals and barracks and granaries and stables, the battered remains of which are standing to this day.

Like Cheops, he did things on the grand scale. His harem is said to have contained 500 wives, with 500 eunuchs and attendants to wait on them, and from his discarded spouses, whom he married off to slaves captured from among the fight-

ing African tribes, he bred his famous Black Guard. He is reputed to have owned 30,000 horses and, indeed, the extent of the ruins of the stabling appears to corroborate this story. I was shown the vast subterranean chambers in which the Christian captives were housed – with a grim sense of humour His Majesty built their barracks under the so-called ‘Ambassadors’ Pavilion’ in the Dar el Maghzen, the Royal Palace, where he was wont to receive in audience the envoys of the Christian Powers. Mulay Ismail was a monster of cruelty. He habitually carried a drawn scimitar in his hand. When he mounted his horse he would call a slave to hold his stirrup and it depended on his mood whether he struck the man’s head off or rewarded him with a gold piece. An Englishman, John Windus, who went to Meknez early in the eighteenth century as secretary to a British mission to treat for the ransom of the Christian captives, has left us a curious portrait of this ruler in his little book *A Journey to Mequinez* (Field-Marshal Lyautey had a copy of the original edition and lent it to me while we were at Rabat). Windus gives us a list of the British captives he found at Meknez: it includes the names of a number of seamen from Virginia and other American colonies.

Colonel Friedenberg, who commanded at Meknez – he was soon to play a leading part in the Riff war – was starting off on a tour of inspection of certain military posts in the country of the dissident tribes of the Atlas and offered to let me accompany him. As it was likely to be an arduous trip he stipulated that my wife should be left behind. So a friendly old General and his wife undertook to motor my Lady to Fez, where I arranged to rejoin her in a week’s time, and I went south again. I believe that all the region we traversed is pacified now; but on much of that journey the *pistes* or tracks our cars followed across the *bled* (the Moorish plain) were guarded every two or three hundred yards by Moorish ‘friendlies’, native irregulars in French pay. Wild-looking figures in flowing burnouses on their small Arab horses, having seen us safely past, they raised a rifle in greeting and galloped back to their village.

At a post called Midelt a marvellously smart battalion of the 15th Algerian Rifles (Tirailleurs Algériens) in their pre-War

uniforms of pale-blue monkey jackets and baggy zouave trousers rendered the honours and after dark that evening I sat over a whisky and soda in the wireless-room and watched the subalterns ragging and dancing to the music of the Savoy Hotel Orpheans dance orchestra in London. Outside on the walls every sentry was at his post, the jackals howled on the *bled* and, I was told, a man might not venture a dozen yards beyond the barbed wire defences without risking having his throat cut by a prowling hillman. Yet in the wireless-room I kept hearing snatches of languid English small talk as the couples on the dance floor at the Savoy drifted past the mike in distant London. Odd to picture the cheerful toot of Carroll Gibbons's saxophones falling upon the pricked ears of Chleu cut-throats, with the reek of their mountain hovels so rancid upon them that one might smell them from the wall, as they padded noiselessly beyond the wire on the look-out for a sleeping sentry!

At Midelt Colonel Friedenbergh turned me over to the local commandant who carried me off to even remoter posts which involved crossing the Atlas passes deep in snow. Up to that time my notion of the Frenchmen in the French colonial service had been largely based on the illustrations in Jules Verne and the old French travel books – I thought of a fat man with a funny beard in creased white drill and an odd-looking sun helmet. I was delighted with the stamp of French officer I came into contact with throughout this trip. Particularly the young officers. They were gentlemen, to begin with, and displayed all the unaffected modesty, the keenness on the job, the devotion to their men we associate with the best type of British subaltern. And that, from an Englishman, is high praise.

I made some charming acquaintances. At one isolated post I sat up half the night drinking whisky with the major in command and listening to his stories of Paris at the turn of the century – of Maxim's, and Larue's, and the Café Anglais, which he had known well in his salad days as a young cavalry officer. The major had a remarkable pet, a full-grown wild boar, which followed him round like a terrier – wild boars, he assured me, were highly intelligent animals and made the most delightful companions.

There was a little air of swagger which entranced me about the reception awaiting our party at a fortified post called Ksar es Souk on the edge of the Sahara, in the heart of the dissident country. On our way there night overtook us as our train of motor-cars ploughed their way across the barren scrub, and I was not a little thrilled when an automatic was thrust into my hand and I was warned, in the event of an attack, not to allow myself to fall living into the hands of the enemy – the Chleu tribesmen have a habit of turning their prisoners over to the women who see to it that the hated infidel does not die too soon. However, the expected attack did not materialise and we reached our destination without incident to be greeted by native irregulars bearing torches who guided us up the steep road to the kasbah, or fort, where cressets flamed on the battlements in our honour. We were two hours late for dinner and the Captain, our host, was in despair for out of the most meagre resources at his disposal in that desolate spot he had contrived a marvellous banquet, with hand-painted menu cards and three or four sorts of wine. However, the chief came nobly up to scratch and even the ice-cream – the climax of the feast – was beyond cavil.

The dinner was a triumph.

I have mentioned that it was Field-Marshal Lyautey's policy to interfere as little as possible with existing Moorish institutions. When at length I rejoined my wife at Fez she told me of a bizarre experience she had had there. I should explain that before we left Paris a French friend of mine had confided to me that one of the most curious sights at Fez was the native lunatic asylum, installed, as lunatics under the Koran enjoy the special protection of Allah, in what was formerly the house of a Moslem religious brotherhood; but my friend warned me that permission to visit the place was extremely difficult to obtain. Lunching at the house of the General commanding at Fez, my wife mentioned this story to a French lady journalist who was of the party. The latter became much intrigued and, being a woman, did not rest until she had persuaded her host to arrange for my wife and her then and there to visit the asylum.

From my wife's description I imagine that London's eighteenth-century Bedlam, as depicted in Hogarth's celebrated painting, was not unlike this Fez lunatic asylum. A fetid stench, as of a wild beast's cage, caught the visitors by the throat as they entered the establishment. It was a dilapidated old shell of a building, consisting of a narrow, high-roofed hall surrounded with cells on two tiers, where behind bars the wretched inmates lay on filthy straw in chains, the more violent cases being fettered by the neck to the wall. The whole place rang with groans and shrieks and maniacal howls, and the clank of steel as the lunatics rattled their chains or flung themselves against the bars of their cells—my wife said it was like a glimpse of the inferno.

Well, I had to see this, too. But it was a day or two before I received permission. When it finally arrived, my Lady went along with me. At first she refused to believe that it was the place she had visited before. The wild beast reek had given way to the odour of disinfectants: there was clean straw in the cells and most of the chains had disappeared. As for the inmates they were unnaturally quiet—it was evident that a pique here and there had produced the desired effect.

I was bitterly disappointed. I felt that I had been cheated out of a unique specimen to add to my cabinet of macabre experiences.

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We finished our 5,000-mile motor tour of North Africa at Tunis in April and crossed to Sicily to spend a week or two among the flowers of a very wet spring at Palermo and Taormina. At Palermo we stopped at the Villa Igeia which, with its terraced flower gardens descending to the azure waters of the Mediterranean, is assuredly one of the most beautiful hotels in the world. We were lunching there one day when King George who, accompanied by Queen Mary, was at that time on the Mediterranean cruise he undertook at his doctors' bidding after his serious illness, came ashore with the Queen from the royal yacht to lunch under an awning in the garden.

As we were to leave next day we had planned to visit the Palermo Museum that afternoon. But on arriving there we

found it closed and the red carpet out – their Britannic Majesties were expected. Almost at the same moment the King and Queen arrived: I don't know quite how it happened but, before we were fully aware of it, we were being ushered in with the rest of the suite in the wake of the royal party. In one of the rooms Queen Mary's quick eye detected the Royal Arms of England engraved upon an old silver inkstand and a pair of silver candlesticks: the Curator explained that they had once belonged to Cardinal York, grandson of James II and brother of the Young Pretender. But Cardinal York had spent the greater part of his life at the Vatican, the Queen pointed out: how had his silver come to Palermo?

Nobody could answer this question. But some years later, when I was in the United States, I found a reference to Cardinal York on the back of a newspaper cutting from a Catholic newspaper – I think it was the *Universe* – which someone had sent me from London. It mentioned that, at the time of the occupation of Rome by the French under Napoleon in 1805, Cardinal York had taken refuge in Sicily. As this went some way towards answering Her Majesty's question, I wrote to the Dowager Lady Airlie, one of the Queen's Ladies-in-Waiting, who had presented my wife at Court, explaining the circumstances and enclosing the clipping. Queen Mary sent me back a message through Lady Airlie, to say she remembered the incident perfectly and asked to be allowed to keep the cutting.

At our first interview at Casablanca Field-Marshal Lyautey had predicted that I should find that tourists could travel in complete security and comfort throughout the greater part of French Morocco. Conditions were even as he said and I so reported in the series of articles I wrote for the *Continental Daily Mail*. The articles duly appeared but hardly was I back in France when Abd el Krim's rising against the Spaniards spread to French Morocco, and France had a 'little war' of the first magnitude on her hands.

I do not know that even then the security of tourists in the interior of the French zone was actually affected. But the coincidence gave my friends a good laugh at my expense.

CHAPTER XXX

TRAVELS

WHEN I gave up my job with the *Daily Mail* for fiction, friends exclaimed to me, 'But how marvellous for you! Now you'll be able to live where you like and write your stories.' They did not know, and I did not know—at least, I had not discovered it then—that in this business of being a novelist, it is not a question of living where you like and writing, but of living where your stories like to be written.

After my years of independence abroad, as a 'special' shuttling to and fro across the Continent in the trans-European expresses, as a war correspondent with a horse between my knees, I had felt vaguely irked by the restraint of a desk job—how much I did not fully grasp until I became my own master. Against the sober russet of Blackfriars, as I quitted Carmelite House for the last time, the French Riviera loomed before my eyes as an enchanting vision of blue skies, perpetual sunshine and sparkling seas. I could conjure up no fairer prospect than to sit in an harbour by the sea at Cannes and turn out my stories. Well, I attained my heart's desire. I had my harbour at Cannes with a view from my work-table to ensnare the senses, embracing as it did the whole sweep of that peerless bay, from the smoky shapes of the Iles de Lérins to eastward to the purple peaks of the Esterel on the west.

But not at once. My North African journeys and a short visit I paid to the United States in the winter of '24 hindered the immediate realisation of my dream, although my wife and I spent as much time as we could at Cannes between trips. On our return from Morocco in the early summer of 1925 a recurrence of my old War injury sent me back to hospital to be operated on once more. This time I went to King

Edward VII's Hospital for Officers in London, which has been run so ably and for so many years by that angel of mercy, Sister Agnes. Sister Agnes is a remarkable personality and one of the things of which I have been proudest in my life is her friendship. One of the most beautiful young women in Victorian London, with every advantage of wealth and position, she gave up her life to nursing and there are thousands of British officers, the length and breadth of the Empire, who on hearing her name will rise up and call her blessed. A martinet and an autocrat she runs her hospital in Grosvenor Crescent like a battleship, and the most famous surgeons in England tremble before her. To hear Sister Agnes dressing down a patient who has broken the rules is something to be remembered; but it is also something to be remembered to see the way the eyes of the sick and suffering light up when that trim figure in hospital blue with the beautifully small, cool hands appears in the wards. King George V was devoted to Sister Agnes and, in addition to the gifts of wine and game and fruit he constantly sent to the hospital, showed his friendship in a specially gracious manner by giving her a key to the gardens of Buckingham Palace to enable her to obtain a breath of fresh air in peaceful surroundings in the midst of her crowded days of self-sacrifice.

On recovering from this, my third operation, I decided henceforth to steer clear of journalism, as interfering too much with my novel writing, and to settle down at Cannes and devote myself wholly to fiction. Those years, from 1924 to 1927, when my mother's serious illness called me back to London, were Cannes's fat years, after the lean years of the War. The great depression of 1929 was still under the horizon and a cheap franc drew a multitude of winter sunshine seekers from the United States and all European countries to Cannes where the late Cornuché guided the destinies of the big white Casino overlooking the port. Stocky, grizzled and uncompromisingly *petit bourgeois* in type, Cornuché was the living incorporation of César Ritz's celebrated apothegm, '*Le client n'a jamais tort.*' This master dispenser of pleasures and elegance, who had made such a close study of the psychology

of gamblers that he deliberately kept the gaming-rooms at Cannes and Deauville overheated on the grounds that a warm temperature stimulates the desire to play, had first learnt his trade as head waiter Chez Maxim in the heyday of that renowned Paris restaurant. Impassively deferential to everyone, though without fawning or familiarity, he was to be encountered in and about the Casino at all hours, the hardest worker among the great army of his employees. And he never forgot a face. Whether it were an English lord or an Argentine card-sharp, Cornuché remembered him, if but once the small bright eye had lighted on him. Under his magical touch the Cannes Casino knew a cycle of unalloyed and unparalleled prosperity.

Those were the days when the debonair and gifted Jean Patou who died so prematurely could gather 'by personal invitation only' a thousand fashionable women customers to tea at the Casino to view his 'collection', with hundreds of other mondaines frantically clamouring at the doors for admission: when a thousand-franc tip would not secure the late-comer a table at the Saturday night galas at the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs; and when the gaming-rooms at night presented such a fantastic spectacle of beauty and fashion and luxury run riot in the way of jewels and high stakes as could be seen nowhere in the world. One would have to go to Hollywood for adjectives to describe the scene – it was coruscating, glamorous, enthralling.

But it palled. The eyes can have a surfeit of gleaming shoulders and lamé frocks, of pearls and ermine, diamonds and silver fox just as the appetite will turn in revolt from a daily diet of caviar and champagne. My wife and I went to luncheons and cocktail parties and gala dinners, at Cannes and right along the coast as far as Monte Carlo and Menton on one side and Saint Raphael on the other – it was a steady round of gaiety all through the season.

But I felt myself stagnating. Neither of us gambled and I was at my desk in my summer-house at nine each morning; but I became increasingly conscious that my writing atmosphere was unbreathable. It was a holiday atmosphere, and



SENOR BLASCO IBANEZ
(*Keystone*)

I was a working man. The whole Côte d'Azur was organised for pleasure – the flowers, the exquisite villas, the chic restaurants and wonderful food, the deft service – and I had my living to get. Real life and all its implications of struggle and achievement, romance, the clash of political strife, were as remote from this land of Cockayne as the fogs of my native London and what was left in its place seemed as artificial as the lovely, shimmering view that unfolded itself at the foot of our terrace. All through my working years I had been immersed in the world of action, at grips with the sublime, cruel, exciting, disappointing, inspiring, tantalising thing called life: I belonged to the world of action. But there was no action on these sun-soaked shores, just as there was no tide: only parties, galas, gossip and gambling. 'If I stay here,' I told myself. 'I shall eat the lotus. I shall go native.'

I am aware that this standpoint is strictly personal to myself. There were authors then, scattered up and down the Riviera as there are to-day, writing their books oblivious of any anti-pathetic influences in the ambient air. That stalwart veteran and prince of story-tellers, the old maestro who has more than a hundred and fifty full-length 'thrillers' to his credit, my dear friend, E. Phillips Oppenheim, has made the French Riviera, with a few passing defections, his home for many years. Anyone more thoroughly steeped in the Côte d'Azur atmosphere it is impossible to conceive, yet the environment has assuredly not impaired the fecundity either of his pen or of his imagination. For all his three score years and ten he retains the incurably romantic mind of youth. Like that other spinner of sensational tales, the gracious Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, he has the sweetest and gentlest of natures, yet like her he lives in a world of his own imagining peopled with potential assassins, with mystery behind every lighted window and violent death behind every bush. When 'Oppy' comes into the room, it's a party: his greatest happiness in life is to gather his friends about him and be gay. Some of my most pleasant memories of the Riviera are associated with the hours spent in company with 'the Opps' – Mrs. Phillips Oppenheim, a Bostonian, seems, like her husband, to possess the secret of perpetual

youth. I was delighted at Boston last year to find him one of the most honoured guests at the banquet to celebrate the centenary of his American publishers, the firm of Little, Brown, and I was inordinately proud as a Briton to see a representative gathering of men and women of note in American letters drinking his health with acclamation.

'Oppy' had a villa on the golf-course at Cagnes-sur-Mer on the road to Nice: the most famous author living at Cannes was the late W. J. Locke. Locke was a man with a passionate devotion to letters as was revealed by his wide knowledge of both French and English literature and his deep love of the English language. At his beautiful house at La Californie, the Villa des Arcades, where he and Aimée Locke entertained the whole world and his wife during the season, he liked nothing better than to sit down and talk books with me. It touched me to find that he, so much my senior in age and experience and literary standing, always treated me as a colleague, a fellow-author. Rudyard Kipling used to display the same charming courtesy towards me. It did not deceive me, but it raised my writing moral ace-high. It has been my experience that the really pre-eminent in any walk of life never condescend but instinctively meet their fellow-man on the same level. I have always regarded this trait as one of the outstanding tests of character.

One of my raciest memories of the literary colony on the Riviera centres about that extravagant personality, the author of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, the late Vicente Blasco Ibañez. A convinced anarchist, he had been for years the stormy petrel of politics in his native city of Valencia, had been fined and jailed repeatedly for his violent attacks on the established authority in Spain, and ultimately exiled. He lived in an extraordinary villa at Menton-Garavan, within a few miles of the Italian frontier. The first time I called on him, he had recently published his famous onslaught on King Alfonso, then still ruling over Spain, in the form of a brochure and went in imminent expectation of a raid by infuriated Spanish monarchists across the frontier from Italy attempting to kidnap him – his mail was full of threatening letters. On

arriving at the villa I found the gates barred and padlocked and I had to submit to a prolonged interrogatory through the grill by a black-envisaged Spaniard who looked like a retired *picador*, before I was admitted.

Blasco Ibañez was a fantastic personage. He was a great, roaring, gesticulating, bragging tun of a man, who simply radiated creative energy. He talked, as he ate, immoderately and at table habitually did both at once – at lunch at his house one day I counted as he gobbled seventeen potatoes in rapid succession: it was like feeding a belt into a machine-gun. He spoke French fluently but with the Spanish pronunciation – the violence he did to the language of Racine had to be heard to be believed. He would declaim, waving his fork in the air and at the same time smiling so disingenuously as to rob the boast of any jarring effect. 'Jé souis lé plou grand écrivang au monde. Jé fais en ce momang l'histoire dé Cristóforo Colón – c'est esplendide, c'est magnifique. *Cosmopolitán* (the Hearst magazine with which he had a contract) va poublir mon Cristóforo. Jé vous dis qué ils en sont ecstasiés. Vous verrez, il est plou grand é plous important encore qué *Los Cuadro Jinetes* (The Four Horsemen).' It is impossible to convey the gusto with which he would roll forth this incredible jargon in his husky Spanish voice, bolting his food and draining great goblets of burgundy while he talked.

His house was as grotesque as he was, crammed with the most heterogeneous collection of furniture, good old Spanish and French pieces side by side with all sorts of gilt junk and plush from the auction-rooms. His most treasured possession, which all visitors had to be trundled off to the drawing-room to inspect, was a truly dreadful modern Japanese picture of sea-waves worked in silk, presented to him by the Japanese Government on the occasion of a trip he had made to the Far East. 'C'est fantastique, hein?' he would exclaim, standing back in admiration and beaming broadly. 'Ong dirait de vraies vagues. Ce tableau vait oune millión!'

He told me that when he wrote *The Four Horsemen*, in Paris, in the first winter of the War he was so poor that he could not afford a fire, but sat all day in his hat and

overcoat with a rug about his knees in the tiny flat he occupied, in the Avenue Kléber, writing for dear life. The novel had an enormous sale in the United States. But Ibañez who at that time, of the scores of novels he had written, had never had one translated into English, sold the American rights of *The Four Horsemen* outright for a mere pittance and would have made nothing out of the sensational American sales if the publishers with characteristic American generosity had not insisted on paying him a royalty over and above that paid to the translator. His fame securely established internationally through *The Four Horsemen*, Ibañez earned a very large income from the sale of his stories to the magazines, the motion pictures and in book form and spent the money as fast as it came in on 'improvements' to his villa. He had the building mania in its acutest form. The grounds were a confused mass of pavilions, and summer-houses, and statues, and fountains, a welter of concrete and tiling of the most garish hues, with plaster gnomes and deer among the flower-beds – one might have been in one of the newer suburbs of Barcelona. He called this phantasmagoria of styles *El Jardín dos Novelistas* (*The Garden of Novelists*), each nation being typified by a statue of its foremost writer. Thus, Spain was represented by Cervantes, France by Balzac, England by Dickens, and Germany by Schiller. The pedestal allotted to America was blank and Ibañez consulted me as to who I considered to be America's greatest novelist. I told him unhesitatingly 'Mark Twain' and he seemed to agree with me, although he mentioned that the names of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bret Harte and Sinclair Lewis had also been suggested. He informed me that at death he intended to leave *The Garden of Novelists* suitably endowed for the enjoyment of the writers of the world. Ibañez died a few years later, but I never heard whether this plan of his was carried out.

He had published hundreds of books in his life – novels, biographies, critical studies, pamphlets: a huge bookcase in his wildly disordered study overflowed with them. Newspaper editor, novelist, pamphleteer, duellist, Republican, free-thinker, anti-clerical, he was the perfect example of the con-

tinental *homme de lettres* of the age of Hugo or Dumas. Notwithstanding his rather childish boasting, he was an admirable writer and his novels abound in the most skilful character-drawing and splendid descriptive—his portrait of the old Argentine ranch owner in *The Four Horsemen*, for instance, and the whole bull-ring atmosphere of *Blood and Sand*, even in translation, are inimitable.

He was a tremendous worker. He showed me an entire bookcase filled with books and pamphlets in Spanish, Italian and French which he had collected for the purposes of the Christopher Columbus novel he was writing for the *Cosmopolitan*. Nobody had made any serious attempt to glean the true facts about Columbus's life before, he informed me. Columbus was a slavetrader and a pirate, a man in the 'tradición' of 'you English', an 'incredible personage'. Ibañez had planned his novel as a trilogy. Having duly completed the first book he sent it to the *Cosmopolitan*, only to receive the MS. back with a note from Ray Long, the editor, complaining that it lacked 'love interest'. Ibañez displayed neither disappointment nor resentment. Although it meant virtually rewriting the first book, he immediately proceeded to meet Ray Long's criticism by introducing the requisite 'feminine interest' in the person of a seductive Italian invented for the purpose, the explorer's mistress who took ship with him disguised as a cabin boy. Ibañez told me all about it. 'Cé n'est pas tout à fait historique,' he remarked cheerfully, 'mais cé n'est pas sans vraisemblance non plou. Oun type pareil aurait certainemang eu des maîtresses. Et oun long voyage comme ça, qué diable!'

The sporting spirit he revealed over this incident was a lesson I never forgot. It stood me in good stead when in due course I had similar experiences at the hands of American editors. American magazine editors are apt to be drastic in the demands they make upon authors to recast or revise their stories—the infuriating thing is that the editors are usually right.

I think that Ibañez had finished only the first volume of his trilogy when he died. I have often wondered what became

of the rest of the manuscript. Politically, we had scarcely an idea in common: indeed, as though to proclaim it, it amused him at times to take sly digs at my universally respected sovereign (invariably alluded to as 'votre Roi Jorge' – there was something peculiarly preposterous in hearing our good King George spoken of as 'King Horgay') not as a man, but as king and as such abhorred by all self-respecting anarchists. For King Alfonso, however, he had nothing but the bitterest hostility and contempt. Ibañez was conspicuously incorruptible and sincere and it was impossible not to respect one who throughout his life had championed as passionately as ever Voltaire did the right of the human mind to freedom and had suffered imprisonment, poverty and exile in defence of his beliefs. Now his mortal remains, triumphantly brought back to Spain after the fall of the monarchy, repose in a splendid mausoleum in his native Valencia, since so intimately associated with those principles for which he always fought. A fervent *Regionalista*, he had the warmest affection for Valencia and the marshlands about it, as so many of his novels attest.

I think the earth rests lightly upon him for that he has come home.

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Cannes taught me that vegetation was not for the likes of me. Years of active newspaper work give the mind a hair-trigger sensibility to the swiftly changing march of events so that it craves live contacts as a drug addict craves drugs. In the end Fate, which so often takes a hand in these things, decided the matter. An urgent summons recalled me to London to the bedside of my mother, who was rapidly failing. She lingered for a year and by that time I was in the swim again. I have never forsaken the world of action since, except temporarily, to finish off a book.

My mother died in May 1928. She was in her eightieth year. Her long life curiously bracketed two notable periods of Italian history for in her girlhood in Florence she had seen Garibaldi and in her old age in London had counted it a labour of love to teach English to Don Sturzo, one of the ablest and most determined opponents of Italian Fascism, who, an

ordained priest, had filially obeyed the Vatican's direction to withdraw from the political fray and settled down in exile in London where he still remains. Between 1928 and 1930 (when I set out to pay a long-deferred visit to my brother in New York), in the intervals of novel writing and contributing for a time a weekly political article to the *Sunday Graphic*, I found time to attend the Winter Olympiad at St. Moritz (where I caught pleurisy while watching the Canadians defeat the Czechs at ice hockey and spent most of my stay in bed), to accompany President Cosgrave of the Irish Free State on a tour of inspection of the Shannon power scheme, and to make a long trip through Spain, starting with the Seville Exhibition of 1930 and the Holy Week processions attended by King Alfonso for the first time since his childhood and, as it proved, for the last time as King, and ending with Barcelona and the Barcelona Exhibition.

The Irish trip, for which I was indebted to my old friend, Dr. P. J. Keogh, the well-known Dublin throat specialist, who was studying medicine in Vienna when I was a newspaper correspondent there before the War, was a delightful interlude in a busy life. The Irish Republicans were still giving trouble at this time and on our journey to the West President Cosgrave and his colleagues were guarded by plain clothes men. At Mount Shannon, where we spent the night, my wife on her way to the bath in the morning was scared half out of her wits by the sudden appearance of one of these bodyguards who confronted her round a turn in the corridor, gun in hand. A German firm had secured the contract for the Shannon scheme and the German engineers and foremen were much puzzled by the Irish character as revealed by the hundreds of navvies from all parts of the country who were lodged in the workmen's barracks at Ard-na-Crushna. The Gaelic-speaking gangs from Connemara, the men from 'the Joyce country' or 'the mountainy men', as they call them in the West, particularly bewildered the matter-of-fact Teuton. They lived in squads of ten or so, and got their own meals, eating meat rarely and subsisting mainly on tea and potato cake. They seemed entirely impervious to the wet, facing in

their white frieze coats the heaviest downpour even though it lasted all day. But they could not be reprimanded. If one of the squad had a grievance, real or fancied, the whole team would quietly depart and trudge home to their mountains—the tidy German mind could not fathom them at all.

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I had a standing invitation to visit my brother in America, but sundry commitments made it impossible for me to get away before the end of 1930. On December 16 my wife and I sailed in the S.S. *Paris*, of the French Line, from Le Havre. We had planned to be away for only a few months—actually, we did not return to England for three and a half years.

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CHAPTER XXXI

AMERICA IN THE BOOM

I WAS still in sailor suits when I privately formed the resolve to visit America one day. Strangely enough, it was not, as in the case of most small boys, the America of the redskin and bison that stirred my interest: I did not read Fenimore Cooper until I was at school and then found him, as I still find him, stilted and prolix and writing terrible English. It was modern America as crudely typified by some pictures in a scrap album given me for Christmas that first captured my boyish imagination. I thought that the United States must be one of the most wonderful countries in the world.

Which, of course, it is.

When I was a child the toyshops used to sell 'scraps', brightly-coloured 'cut outs', highly glazed, which we would stick into albums. I wonder if 'scraps' are still manufactured; I have not seen any for years. A much respected family friend, Miss Trickett, a very old lady – her father died at the age of ninety-eight and she lived to be over ninety – made this album for me, a bulky book filled with the most alluring and varied collection of 'scraps' – characters from Shakespeare, characters from Dickens, pictures of horse-racing and hunting, portraits of the Kings and Queens of England, fairy-tales illustrated and scenes of military and naval life. Sandwiched between all this 'richness', as Mr. Squeers might have said, were 'scraps' illustrative of life in contemporary America, showing the huge locomotives with their cow-catchers and squat smokestacks, 'hook and ladder' companies with firemen in funny hats, race-track scenes and scenes from the South with Mississippi stern-wheel steamers and darkies picking cotton and dancing and going to prayer-meeting. I pored over these

American pages with special delight, particularly enraptured by the railway scenes and the spectacle of the fire engines with their spanking teams of horses racing through snowy New York streets. The scraps were stuck in with that office paste which reeks of cloves and to this day I never sniff the characteristic odour of stickphast without thinking gratefully of that beloved scrap album, which, incidentally, I still possess.

Even in those pre-jazz, pre-movie, days American influences were already strong in England. There were the Moody and Sankey revivalist meetings and the Moody and Sankey hymns (still sung), and 'The Minstrels' – the Moore and Burgess at the old St. James's Hall, the Christy Minstrels at Islington – with their Yankee jokes 'put over' in laborious cross-talk between Chairman and the corner-men (*'Well, Brother Bones, perhaps you will tell me why your maiden aunt wears cotton gloves?'*) and sweet, sad solos and choruses about darkies singin' and banjoes ringin' in Stephen Foster's somewhat over-sentimentalised Old South, and glimpses of family life in New England, with candy-pulling and sleighing parties, as revealed in Louisa M. Allcott's *Little Women* stories, which my sisters and I, in common with most British children, knew almost by heart, and a series of cheap books, pocket-size and bound in shiny blue cloth – published, I think, in Chicago and sold by the thousand in England – of *A Thousand and One Jokes* or *A Thousand and One Tricks*, which impressed me with the belief that Americans must be the most amusing and resourceful people.

Which is actually what they are.

My childhood impressions of America were largely influenced by the famous and almost legendary Barnum. I have a hazy recollection of being taken to Barnum's Show at Olympia as a very little boy, but whether this was on the occasion of the original visit to London of 'The Greatest Show On Earth' (before the name of Bailey was linked to it), I am unable to say. What is certain, however, is that to us children and to millions of grown Britons besides, Barnum figured as the typical American and his most sensational coups, such as the purchase from the London Zoo of Jumbo, the largest elephant in

the world, which precipitated almost a national crisis in England, were regarded as characteristic of the American mentality. With his genius for publicity, Barnum sold himself very effectively on both sides of the Atlantic. The Americans understood him; the British did not. The American, with his rustic background, is inured to the type of cheapjack and spell-binder who preys on the chawbacons at the country fairs, and to this day displays singular coldbloodedness about being diddled: the British masses, however, accepted Barnum's mixture of braggadocio, bluff and brazen effrontery as typically American. I have sometimes reflected that the very notoriety which Barnum enjoyed, not only in England but throughout Europe, was a serious factor in delaying a truer understanding of the American people on the part of the Old World.

My father never went to America, but as a newspaper man he had sundry American connections in London. After the Franco-Prussian War the elder Bennett wanted him to return to Italy for the *New York Herald*. My parent preferred to remain with Reuter's, but he afterwards worked for Bennett on the short-lived and now almost entirely forgotten London edition of the *Herald*, though this was before I was old enough to remember anything about it. When I was no more than nine or ten, however, my nascent interest in the United States was quickened by the arrival in our midst of an old friend of my father's, the late John Beaufoy Lane, a Londoner who had worked for years as a reporter in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Jack, with his rather gusty *bonhomie*, his slightly nasal twang, his fur coat and large cigars, had the important, wealthy air which the British of that period invariably associated with Americans and he lived up to this reputation by entertaining us children lavishly. He fascinated me in particular by the thrilling stories he told us of the train wrecks and fires he had reported, the hangings he had attended. In the eyes of one small English boy it seemed to be a sheerly fabulous country he was describing.

There were other bracing contacts. I was a schoolboy when Barnum and Bailey's Circus and later, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, came to London and in the holidays, I pestered my

father for Press passes. Armed with these I made the acquaintance of that characteristically American type, the circus Press agent. Men like Toadie Hamilton (I trust I have spelt that extraordinary name correctly), Balch (who subsequently became prominently identified with the exploitation of Scott's Emulsion) and Wells, hat on head, feet on the desk, in the Press office, reeking of the adjacent stables and wild beast cages, were extraordinarily good-natured in allowing me and my school friends to run around freely 'behind', yarning with freaks, lion-tamers, cowboys and Indians. Years later at Madison Square Garden, when the Ringling Circus was paying its annual visit to New York, I talked over those old London days with the one and only Dexter Fellowes, the celebrated Ringling Circus publicity man, who had been with Colonel Cody ('Buffalo Bill') and the Wild West Show in England.

It was not surprising that my boyish mind conceived of modern America as a five-ring circus which, to a certain extent, it is.

I met and shook hands with the great Buffalo Bill, almost as splendid-looking a figure in his old age as he must have been in his youth, still clear of eye, long of leg and straight of back, with his silvery hair (which he wore about his shoulders in the old Western manner) flowing from under the big slouch hat. Nearly four decades later I was to stand on the shores of Blue Mountain Lake in the Adirondacks beside the last surviving timbers of the log-cabin of Ned Buntline, sailor, soldier, author and frontiersman, who, the first to conceive the dramatic possibilities of Buffalo Bill, put him on the stage in a show in Chicago.

Ned Buntline—his full name was Edward Zane Carroll Buntline—was one of the best-known of the American dime novelists. From the point of view of popularity, the American dime novel—published, as its name implies at ten cents (5d.)—was the precursor of the modern 'thriller'. Written strictly to a pattern which varied only according to the category of tale, it was turned out by the hundreds of volumes annually by hack authors who thought nothing of writing 10,000 words a day. England as well as the United States was flooded with

these American dime novels and in the London of my youth their lurid covers and even more lurid titles were to be seen in every small newspaper shop. They were known as 'penny bloods' and at a preparatory school I attended for a few months in London we were forbidden to read them, with the result that an active surreptitious exchange business in 'penny bloods' was in constant operation.

The remains of Ned Buntline's shack are still to be seen at Eagle Nest, the summer camp of my friends, the Hochschild family, where my wife and I spent many happy days when we were in the States. Harold Hochschild collects Ned Buntline dime novels – rather a serious undertaking when it is realised that, between the years 1847 and 1886, Ned Buntline wrote between 200 and 250 dime novels, sea stories, 'Westerns' and tales of love and crime. He was born in Delaware, ran away to sea and eventually received a commission as midshipman in the U.S. Navy. While in the Navy he was already writing for the New York newspapers and in 1860, after leaving the service, started his own periodical *Ned Buntline's Own* which vigorously attacked the prevailing corruption in New York City politics. Typical of his novels were *The Miseries and Mysteries of New York*, *The B'hoys of New York* and *The Gals of New York*. After the civil war in which he was severely wounded he became a frontiersman in Kansas City and was famous as a buffalo and Indian hunter, the friend of such noted Western characters as 'Captain Jack' Crawford and Big Bill Hickox.

Ned Buntline used to hunt in the woods about Eagle Nest. There are no wolves surviving in the Adirondacks now but old Ned has left it on record that one winter's day, when the lake was frozen over, he saw from his shack a pack of wolves attacking a deer on the ice and was afraid to shoot lest he should wound the deer and seal its fate. At one time he lived at the shack with a young Indian woman whom he had married. She died in the cabin and is said to be buried close by; but the grave has never been traced.

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The Belle of New York, with Gustav Kerker's charming

music and the even more charming Edna May in the title rôle, took London by storm while I was still at school. Its colourful pictures of New York's Bowery and Chinatown fascinated me, and I saw the play many times. Once an Associated Press man, whom I had met with my father, took me into the then newly-opened American Bar at the Hotel Cecil and bought me my first cocktail. A small, nubbly-faced little man stood at the brass rail and what a thrill I had when my companion introduced me! It was Frank Lawton, 'the Whistling Comedian', who played the Bowery tough in *The Belle of New York* and whose melodious whistling was one of the hits of the show. He was the father of Frank Lawton, one of the best of London's young actors to-day. Young Frank came to New York when I was there a few years back and made an instant success in *The Wind And The Rain*; but Broadway had forgotten its one-time favourite, the Whistling Comedian, and no newspaper mentioned the London star's American father.

Properly speaking, there is no American colony in London for, although a great many Americans are settled there, our common speech obviates the necessity for them to group themselves in an isolated community. I had to go abroad and move among the American colonies established in the various European capitals to obtain my first glimpse of the American spirit in operation, to fathom something of the average American's almost fanatical attachment to his country (which in many cases is merely his country of adoption) and to home ties, the national tendency to weigh all issues with American weights and measures. As a correspondent on the Continent before the War I came across all sorts and conditions of American – indeed, I cultivated Americans, for I liked what I knew of them, besides being interested in their country. I had left school, like nearly all British schoolboys, without the slightest ordered knowledge of the United States, its politics and its institutions: these lacunae I endeavoured, haphazard and higgledy-piggledy, to fill through a variety of American contacts ranging from the pretty American girls I danced and played golf with to the prominent Americans I encountered in the course of my work – ex-Presidents such as Taft and Theodore

Roosevelt, famous ambassadors such as Choate and Henry White, leading newspaper figures such as Melville Stone, 'the maker of the modern Associated Press', and the redoubtable 'Marse Henry' Watterson, of the Louisville *Courier Journal* – an old-time editor straight from the pages of Mark Twain – opera singers such as Putnam Griswold, who played Wagnerian Kings at the Berlin Opera and at Covent Garden, and Olympic champions.

Out of this welter of impressions I constructed for myself a picture of modern America with its light and shade, of which I will only say that, by contrast with it, the reality eclipsed my most sanguine expectations.

A great American editor, the late Frank Cobb, of the now defunct *World*, defined the average newspaper man's life in a sentence when with his dying breath he murmured, 'One damn thing after another.' Newspaper work is an inescapable servitude, notably for the man in a responsible job and in my years abroad I could never see the way clear far enough ahead to make the trip across the Atlantic I had so long promised myself. When I was transferred back to London as chief special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, prospects became brighter and more than once Northcliffe spoke of sending me to America. But the outbreak of the World War disposed of any such plan and actually it was not until the autumn of 1924, two years and a half after I had quitted Fleet Street (my two Egyptian visits intervening) that I found myself free to realise my ambition.

In order to learn anything about modern America, the Englishman of average intelligence should in my opinion, pay at least two visits to the United States. The first should be in the nature of a preliminary exploration of the ground, to tide the newcomer over the shock of his initial impressions which are always bewildering, in many respects overwhelming, in others somewhat disillusioning. Because the Briton who takes the trouble to make any inquiry into the matter will discover that, stated in general terms, the mass of the American people are too deeply absorbed in the problems of their own enormous territory to have more than a limited interest in Europe.

Furthermore, if he is one of those Englishmen who has based his conception of the attitude of modern America towards this country in particular upon the 'blood-is-thicker-than-water-hands-across-the-sea' tone of the speeches at so many Anglo-American banquets at home, he will soon gather from newspaper editorials and utterances in Congress (if some American friend does not take pity on his ignorance and previously enlighten him) that, in the minds of millions of Americans, Britain is a foreign country enjoying no more privileged position in American eyes, than say, Germany or Sweden, both of which nations have contributed so largely to the modern American stock, than that which the use of a common language confers.

When he gets to know the United States better, he will apprehend that this, too, is a misleading statement of the real position; but he will not discover it on his first trip across the Atlantic.

On his first visit he will learn, as far as the use of the English language by the two peoples is concerned, that in America the more it is the same, the more it changes. 'Shop To Let' becomes 'Store For Rent', a restaurant bill is a 'check', a bank note a 'bill', a stud a 'collar button', a purse a 'pocket book', a bowler a 'derby', a house physician at a hospital an 'interne', and so forth. He will find, however, that it is not the English he speaks or his pronunciation that is apt to be misunderstood, but his English accent which tends to rise and fall by contrast with the American, more inclined to remain in the one key. He will become acquainted with American manners and customs. He will discover, for instance, that there is no intended offence in the surprisingly familiar tone so often adopted by the serving classes in the States, by hotel servants, waiters and the like – it is merely a manifestation of friendliness in a country where in principle one citizen is as good as his fellow.

This is a feature of American life which, I must say, takes some getting used to. Taxi-drivers who address you as 'Cap!' or 'Buddy!', restaurant proprietors (in the cheaper eating-houses) who present the menu with a cheery 'What'll ya eat,

fellers?', waiters who take an order with a 'Righty-ho!' or 'Okay!', leave the newly-landed Briton with a slightly bemused sensation. After a stay of some years in the States I thought I was immune from surprise under this head until, returning from a seaside holiday to one of the most exclusive of the big cosmopolitan New York hotels where (most extravagantly) we were living, the lift attendant who was taking us up to our suite – he was white, not coloured – remarked engagingly to my wife, 'Gee, but that's a swell coat of tan you've got yourself, Mrs. Williams!'

He was not being 'fresh': it was merely his way of welcoming us back. Personally, such incidents appealed to my sense of humour – I would find myself thinking of various Englishmen I know (myself not excluded) who would be all the better for the destarching effect of such encounters.

The average British visitor, on his first trip to the States, rarely sees more than the Eastern towns – New York, Boston, Philadelphia; and if he goes West, it is seldom beyond Chicago: he probably finds time to travel South as far as Washington, but no farther. And here let me interject a word about the familiar dictum that 'New York is not America'. It may be that the seven-million metropolis with its tremendous foreign-born population – its one and a half million Jews, its Italian elements growing in numbers and powers so rapidly that they are ousting the Irish in city politics, its Irish and Poles and Greeks – appears to millions of God-fearing, puritanical New Englanders and Middle Westerners, to millions of Southerners steeped in the Cavalier tradition, as a blot on the face of the Republic their fathers wrought: it may be that for voting purposes the raucous cacophony of Manhattan and its four allied boroughs is not the authentic voice of America. But with every year the social and cultural influence of New York over the rest of the country is becoming, for better or worse, more marked.

To-day newspaper syndication sees to it that the news and views of New York are simultaneously disseminated in hundreds of newspapers from one end of the continent to the other while the propaganda influence of the great New York

wireless chains – the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System to name the two leading radio concerns – is all-dominating and incalculable. Thanks to aeroplane distribution, the sales radius of the great New York dailies is yearly wider: smartly written weeklies such as *Time*, attractively produced periodicals such as *Life* and *The New Yorker*, all with enormous sales, infiltrate the remotest corners of the United States with the wisecracking, cynical spirit of Manhattan; while the influence of New York over another unrivalled form of modern propaganda, to wit, the Hollywood motion picture industry, is absolute, not forgetting that the principal News Reels, a no less important propaganda form, are edited and issued in New York. The New York vote may not swing a Presidential election and it is very certain that the placid, plodding existence of millions of religious-minded Americans is but palely reflected in the garish life of Manhattan. But the fact remains that to-day New York as it thinks and acts, applauds or condemns, in its songs and modes and wisecracks, enjoys an ever-growing ascendancy over the rest of the nation.

It is possible for the British visitor to feel the pulse of America in New York, but only if he has acquainted himself by previous travel with American conditions. This is where the second visit I recommend comes in, a visit which should be sufficiently prolonged to enable the newcomer to acquire some practical experience of the great divisions into which the population of the United States naturally falls – the industrial East, the farming Middle West, the cotton-producing South, the fruit-growing Pacific slopes – and so obtain an insight into the dominant features of American life. In the case of the not unfamiliar type of Briton who takes his prejudices with him when he goes abroad, one visit to the United States will probably suffice. He will not find, because he is not looking for it, any inducement to probe below the surface of his first mixed impressions for the explanation of the miracle of modern America.

In the glitter of Manhattan, among the bright lights of the Great White Way, from the lavish hospitality he will receive

in the East, he will learn nothing of the heart-breaking, back-breaking struggle that wrested this country out of virgin forest, plain and mountain, of the struggle for life in which millions of Americans are still engaged. His rich friends who entertain him, the luxury surrounding him, in New York, will confirm him in his impression that the United States is a country of millionaires, and he is likely to embark for home without ever realising that the wealth per head of the population is higher in England than America or that there are more people proportionally to the number of inhabitants in enjoyment of a private income of £1,000 a year in his native land than in the United States.

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I saw America at the zenith, and also at the nadir, of her recent fortunes. I knew the United States in prosperous times and lived there later all through the slump. I can claim that I actually witnessed the launching of the five years boom that was to end with such devastating results in October 1929, for on Election Night, in November 1924, I stood in Times Square, New York, and watched a vast multitude tumultuously acclaim President Coolidge's decisive defeat of the Democratic candidate, ex-Ambassador John W. Davis, as the inauguration of the new era of American prosperity after the depression of post-War years.

'The country safe with Coolidge!' was the slogan of the hour. My seven weeks' stay passed in an atmosphere of raging optimism, bull markets, booming business. The whole nation was spending money like a drunken sailor, the have-nots equally with the haves for, in the prevailing mood of the country, everybody was going to be rich to-morrow. The national high spirits rose superior to the repressing effect of Prohibition. Although the Prohibition laws were almost universally defied in private, this was before the 'Jack and Charlie's' era,¹ the days of the fashionable speakeasies, where

¹ New York's smartest speakeasy in the latter stages of Prohibition. From the fact that it is situated at 21 West 52nd Street, also known simply as '21'. It survived Repeal and is still one of the most fashionable restaurants in Manhattan.

the law was openly violated. By comparison with the conditions I found prevailing on my return to New York six years later, liquor was expensive and mostly bad, while drinking in public was to a large extent of the hush-hush order, with drinks surreptitiously poured from a hip flask or served in soup cups, tea-pots and the like.

Gangsterism was rampant. Between his headquarters in the squalid Chicago suburb of Cicero and his palatial Florida estate, Al Capone, the legendary 'Big Boy' of the liquor traffic, was overlord of the bootleg brewers and the alky-cookers, little dreaming what fate was cooking up for him, in the shape of a cold cell at Alcantraz.¹ In every city of any size, and in many small ones, too, the local 'big shots' of the liquor traffic strutted it, attended by their retinues of 'fixers', 'mouthpieces' and 'gorillas' or 'trigger-men'. With liquor still troublesome to come by and, when obtained, expensive to buy, the merits of his particular brand of 'hooch' was the staple theme of conversation of every club bore, while liquor had become the symbol of hospitality, a distressing state of affairs for the visitors from Europe. On this trip of mine, for instance, in order not to hurt the feelings of kind hosts who had put themselves to an infinity of trouble and expense to give me a good time, I was often compelled to drink gin, which I abominate, and once, as a special compliment to the guest from England, practically an entire bottle of burgundy to wind up an evening already abundantly irrigated with rye whisky, which I don't care about either.

At Washington, switched in between a British Bishop and Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, who had just been defeated as Republican candidate for the Governorship of New York, I was received by President Coolidge. My brother, Douglas, who at that time represented Reuter's in the United States, arranged the meeting and accompanied me to the White House. Now Coolidge's reputation for taciturnity had spread to London and, as we waited in the ante-room, I said to Douglas, 'I'd like to find out if the President is really as silent as they say. Suppose we behave as we would if we were having

¹ The island (Federal) prison for notorious criminals, off the Californian coast.

an audience of the King, that is to say, wait for him to speak first? Let's agree not to open our mouths until he does, whatever happens!'

On our being admitted to the President's study, Mr. Coolidge, with his faintly acid smile, greeted us most amiably and invited us to be seated. We took chairs and there ensued the most embarrassing silence I have ever experienced. For a full two minutes you could have heard a pin drop as the President, with a perfectly expressionless face, gazed straight in front of him. Once or twice I felt his glance flicker in my direction, but I did not meet it—I kept my eyes resolutely fixed on the carpet. At last, heralding his intention with a little grating cough, Coolidge broke the unbearable silence. His voice had a nasal New England ring but was deliberate and quite unembarrassed. 'That's quite an interesting situation you have over there in England,' he remarked casually. (The first Labour administration had just been defeated at the polls.) And he proceeded to speak easily and with authority about the mistakes made by the Ramsay MacDonald Cabinet, incidentally paying a high tribute to the sound political sense of the British electorate. 'England never lets the world down,' he said.

The mental picture I had formed of Calvin Coolidge as a small town lawyer of narrow views and limited interests did not survive our meeting. Whether his taciturnity was instinctive or deliberate, there was poise and authority behind it—you realised it as soon as he began to speak.

It also made you remember that this was the man who, as Governor of Massachusetts, showed real courage and initiative in quelling the Boston police strike.

I packed an incredible number of activities and experiences into those seven weeks I spent in the United States. In New York I attended the 'line up' at Police Headquarters, where habitual criminals caught up in the police net are paraded in order to impress their personalities and idiosyncrasies upon the minds of the assembled plain-clothes force, and in the company of headquarters men roamed round the underworld—

in Chinatown, where one of the bloody 'Tong' (i.e. Chinese secret society) wars was just then being waged, on the lower East Side among the Jews and up in Harlem among the coloured folk. I spoke at the Dutch Treat, the famous New York writers' and artists' luncheon club, on the same programme with the late Jean Patou, the dress designer (Sophie Tucker, then on the eve of her first visit to England, sang some of her numbers for us) and at the Manhattan Club, to a representative gathering of Tammany judges and politicians at a dinner given to me by an old friend, Alexander Konta: I also broadcasted from the earliest of the New York wireless stations, located down-town in those days on the top floor of the old American Telephone Company building.

Outside New York I went to Philadelphia to lunch with the late George Horace Lorimer, that rugged American type, famous editor of the no less famous *Saturday Evening Post*, to which in later years I was to become a contributor; and to Boston to be royally fêted by my publishers the old-established firm of Houghton Mifflin, publishers of Henry James; and on a dash South for a week-end with the Raymond Belmonts at Warrenton, the centre of the Virginian fox-hunting country, visited some old Southern homesteads and at a meet I attended found that negro grooms and second horsemen looked strangely out of place in scenery reminding me of the West of Ireland. When I finally left the States in order to spend Christmas with my wife, it was in a state of blissful exhaustion, my mind a whirl of confused impressions rotating with the spin imparted by the pace of American life.

I had had a wonderful seven weeks without learning anything about the real America, as I realise in retrospect. But I brought back with me the determination to return at my leisure for a closer and longer look at a country which on a preliminary inspection had stimulated my interest, latent since boyhood, in all kinds of fresh directions.

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CHAPTER XXXII

AMERICA IN THE DEPRESSION

THAT distinguished American citizen, the Hon. Alfred ('Al') Smith, usually regarded as the spokesman of the American man in the street, uttered a true word when he remarked, alluding to the depression, 'The American does not carry an umbrella. When it rains, he gets wet.'

The stock market collapse of October 1929 caught the American without his umbrella, indeed: in fact, by the time the worst of the slump was over, he was not only soaked through but stripped almost naked as well. When the Valentine Williamses landed in New York in December 1930, a few days before Christmas, for more than a twelvemonth all over the country it had been the same story of falling markets, receding business, retrenchment, staff reductions, increasing unemployment, bankruptcy. But worse was to come and we were destined to live through it. For more than two long years until, with President Roosevelt's inauguration in March 1933, the slow upward swing set in, we were to see the whole atmosphere of America which, six years before I had known so rich and gay, inexorably changing. I did not realise it then, but the old America had gone for good.

The depression was a subtle process, a sort of creeping paralysis, not very evident at first to the casual beholder. Outwardly, American life, vigorous and vital, seemed to go on as before. Those with the vision and enterprise to capitalise the spirit of the times continued to get rich quickly as they have always done in America – the five-cent Hamburger sandwich bars, for instance, now found at every street corner in the theatre district of Manhattan, were first started in the depression and brought their originator a fortune. As in England in

the slump, the people who always seem to have money to spend appeared to spend it as freely as ever. Successful plays like *Grand Hotel* were still sold out and the smart speakeasies turned away custom. American radio swung into its tremendous expansion in this sombre period and notwithstanding or, perhaps, because of, the hard times, advertisers availed themselves lavishly of the new medium, paying unprecedented sums for their programmes.

The Empire State Building, with its 102 stories, the highest building in the world, and Rockefeller Centre, that breathtaking cluster of soaring towers and cloud-capped pinnacles, were both erected in the depression. The Empire State Building, despite the enthusiasm and prestige of its chairman, 'Al' Smith, had a hard time starting and so many of its hundreds of offices remained unlet in the first years of its existence that some wag christened it the 'empty' State Building. So far had the prevailing economic situation preyed upon the spirits of its sponsors that when this vast undertaking was at last finished and thrown open to the public for inspection, the late Mrs. Henry Moskowitz, an old and tried political counsellor of Governor Smith, who was in charge of the advertising, had considerable difficulty in obtaining a grant of \$3,500 (£700) from the Board of Governors for the purchase of small souvenirs for sale to the public mounting to the top of the tower, as she confided to me one evening in January 1932, when I sat next to her at a dinner-party in New York. But, she added, the whole of that \$3,500 worth of souvenirs was sold in the first hour the tower was open! Since then the revenue from the admission fees charged to visitors, averaging, at \$1 a head, some \$7,000 (£1,400) a day, is said to suffice alone to meet the debenture interest on the building.

Rockefeller Centre is to me one of the wonders of the world. This city of a myriad windows gleaming in unending lines from the tall buildings grouped about a central plaza and shooting like graceful fingers into the sky above Fifth Avenue, is a conception that takes the mind at a bound into the civilisation of half a century ahead. It owes its existence to the faith and fortitude of a single man. At the end of 1930 when I

landed in America not a pick had been levelled against the city blocks extending from 48th to 50th Streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues where this prodigious creation now stands. John D. Rockefeller Junior had reached middle life without being regarded by his contemporaries as anything more than a rich man's son, the faint shadow of a mighty sire. Rejecting all faint-hearted counsels of prudence, he started in the first years of the depression to build Rockefeller Centre, and now that it rears its sheaf of towers complete, it is due to his energy and enterprise that it has become a new focus of New York life, with Big Business competing for office space, and the luxury trades, including the great shipping lines, established in its shops (all air-conditioned). If the great 'Jawn D.' showed the world how to accumulate wealth, his son has shown it how to spend it.

But behind the façade of hustle and bustle which New York presented in that winter of 1930, the dry rot of the depression was treacherously spreading. The luxury trades were first attacked. Under the combined pressure of the hard times and the unchecked competition of the speakeasies, the big hotels and the once fashionable restaurants grew emptier. A little while, and floor upon floor of the huge Manhattan hotels were closed and if they continued to display lines of lighted windows after dark as of yore, it was because the chambermaids had orders to switch on the lights on floors no longer in occupation. One fashionable Fifth Avenue hotel, upon which the mortgage had been foreclosed, was so deeply 'in the red', as the Americans say, that the group to which the premises reverted seriously contemplated demolishing a virtually new building costing many millions of dollars to save the heavy burden of taxation. Ultimately, however, less drastic counsels prevailed and the hotel in question is still in business.

As money was scarce and backers were shy, by and by, of New York's eighty-odd theatres, no more than a score or so were open. The distress among stage folk became so acute that old Dan Frohman, brother of the great Charles who lost his life in the *Lusitania*, and some others founded the Actors' Dinner Club – situated to begin with in a curtained-off part of a church

off Broadway – in order to provide the more destitute members of the profession with at least one square meal a day. Prices were very cheap and if an actor or actress had no money, they were not asked to pay. An excellent entertainment was provided after dinner, and actors and actresses in work, including many famous stars, served at table. Everybody had a good time for very little or no money and nobody's pride was hurt; while it lasted, the Actors' Dinner Club performed a much-needed task in a way that reflected the greatest credit on American kindness of heart.

Pitilessly, the icy wind of the world slump blew along Manhattan's luxury thoroughfares. One by one, dress shops, 'gift' shops, beauty shops and antique shops abandoned the unequal struggle. Thousands of the smartly turned-out and attractive New York working girls were added to the ranks of the unemployed. Manicurists, mannequins, typists, show girls, took to addressing envelopes, house to house canvassing, domestic service – anything to earn a living: the employment agencies along Sixth Avenue, sinister, squalid places, most of them, more concerned with snatching the registration fee than finding jobs, were besieged all day by silent, despairing crowds. Meanwhile, at the street corners on the main avenues the destitute peddled apples under the commiserating eye of the police, while beggars were so numerous that one could scarcely stop to look in a shop-window without being implored for alms.

Month by month, things went from bad to worse, as the slump continued and people's resources became exhausted. Mortgages were foreclosed on all sides and in every residential section of the seven-million city householders found themselves homeless, with their life savings gone, and often their jobs as well, or, if they were fortunate enough not to have been laid off, on heavily cut wages. By drastic retrenchment, by private loans from relations or friends, by pledging their life insurance, they sought to avert utter destitution. But as the slump dragged on even the funds thus raised ran out and the applicants for City relief grew more numerous, the 'bread lines' of the homeless and destitute – at Broadway, on Columbus Circle, after nightfall – ever longer. J. P. McEvoy put the bread line

into a Broadway revue ('Americana') and everybody went to hear Rex Weber sing *Brother, can you spare a dime?* with its haunting refrain. He sang it so beautifully (with a chorus representing a typical collection of down-and-outs, some still wearing their war khaki) that it gave one a lump in the throat.

I wondered if it were the swan song of the America I had known.

Those were strange times. One met people at cocktail parties, erstwhile millionaires, some of them, who had lost everything and were subsisting on the charity of relations or friends and others who, unable to pay the rent of expensive apartments leased in the boom, continued to occupy them rent-free, with the assent, if not on the insistence, of the landlord, unwilling to have a half-empty block of flats on his hands. Thousands of the workless streamed from all parts of the country to New York, looking for jobs that did not exist and swelling the already over-burdened relief rolls. As the result of the break-up of families in the Middle West and the South, bands of homeless youths were roaming about the country, 'riding the ties', that is to say, snatching free rides on the couplings of the trains. The plight of the farming population was desperate. In January 1934, in the first year of President Roosevelt's first administration, I found myself sitting next to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt at a luncheon given by the American Pen Women's Club at Washington, at which I was speaking. She told me that her mail was full of heartbreaking stories of these tragedies of agricultural America and cited the case of a young Texas woman who had roamed with her husband in utter destitution as far as Florida and had kept a diary of the fearful vicissitudes they had been through.

America was drifting towards revolution in those days. Posterity may think as it will of Franklin D. Roosevelt, it cannot be gainsaid that he averted chaos and the general disintegration of the nation by steering the threatened revolution from political into economic channels.

Whatever the future holds in store for the United States, I shall always count myself fortunate for having lived with the American people during its years of trial. It is not adversity

but prosperity that brings out a nation's worse faults: let us not forget that the Continent derived its unpleasant impression of the British 'milor' from the objectionable moneyed type that went travelling abroad in the years of peace and plenty of the mid-Victorian era. The brand of American tourist who during the boom would brag of the prosperity at home as though it were the natural outcome of the superior national character may have given the Old World justification to gloat, when America's lean years followed on the fat. But no one who saw the United States in the depression had any lust to crow.

It might be that Americans had chiefly themselves to blame for the toppling of the inverted pyramid of their economic system, but the courage with which they faced the crumbling of their dreams and the magnificent spirit of mutual aid which displayed itself during those years of bitter trial redeemed many sins of omission and commission. I who saw the slow and inexorable unfolding of the tragedy can only say that the American people has every reason to be proud of the way it bore itself under the ordeal. Behind a certain number of sensational acts of despair, families quietly rallied to the support of their less fortunate members. Those in work advanced what money they could spare to relatives who were laid off or provided them with board and lodging, often in totally inadequate accommodation and almost always on badly shrunken incomes. This is particularly true of the white collar class in the towns. Millions of small employees put up with the discomfort of sharing small suburban apartments or houses with embittered, workless relations for months on end without repining. America 'shared' long before the N.R.A. came along with its slogan. The record of the depression years is a golden page of devotion and self-sacrifice in the annals of the American people.

They don't boast about it. Inhospitability, hard-heartedness, were never American faults. Americans as a race may not be the most modest of peoples as far as their own achievements are concerned. But they don't brag about their charity towards one another. Kindness of heart is a quality embedded in the

roots of the American character, like those rocks you see sprouting from the soil of Manhattan.

Yet that managed to keep up their spirits during the slump. The American brand of humour has a sardonic trend and the national plight afforded it abundant play. They laughed at themselves a lot in America during those years. Many of the jokes were at the expense of the unfortunate President Hoover who meant so well and did so badly, which was scarcely to be wondered at seeing that he was destined to receive the brickbats earned, not only by his own Administration, but the two Republican Administrations immediately preceding his as well. One of the more apocryphal of these jests told how Hoover, walking in the streets of Washington with his friend, the Secretary of the Treasury, the late Andrew Mellon, said, 'Andy, lend me a nickell! I want to call up a friend.' 'Take a dime,' said Andy, 'and call them all up!' (N.B. For British readers: 1 dime = 2 nickels.)

There were many stories about the 'panhandlers', as they called the beggars that infested all the main thoroughfares. One was about a New Yorker accosted by an individual who asked 50 cents (2s.) to buy a cup of coffee. 'Fifty cents for a cup of coffee?' the man addressed exclaimed in surprise. 'Surely, that's a bit steep?' The beggar drew himself up. 'Don't get me wrong, mister,' he said with dignity. 'I ain't one of dese depression bums. I wuz a bum in de boom!' Another quip concerned a man who was so moved by the hard luck story poured into his ear by a panhandler who stopped him on Park Avenue that impulsively he gave the fellow a dollar. Whereupon the beggar burst into tears and thrust into his benefactor's hand a hundred Goldman Sacks shares (a famous speculative stock during the boom).

In the six years during which I was away from America, radio in the United States had developed into a tremendous national force. In place of such modest stations as that from which on my previous visit I had broadcasted a short talk on crime fiction I found the magnificently equipped studios of such mighty concerns as the National Broadcasting Company (an

offshoot of the even mightier Radio Corporation of America, built up by that quiet but vital person, David Sarnoff, a pioneer of the industry) or its principal rival, the Columbia Broadcasting System, in its present shape largely the creation of one enterprising young American, William S. Paley. My ideas as to the function of the wireless in modern life having been nurtured until then on the genteel and rather humdrum programmes of our own B.B.C. I was astonished and fascinated by the lavishness and scope of American broadcasting, and by the ingenuity and variety it revealed, and I spent hours, at all times of the day and night, beside the radio set in my brother Douglas's flat at West 55th Street, where my wife and I stayed for the first month of our arrival.

Though some British circles affect to be rather scornful of American broadcasting by reason of the advertising angle involved, I notice that the American programmes broadcasted on this side of the Atlantic by the B.B.C. are among the most popular of its offerings. Some of the commercial announcements which interrupt programmes, even those of real artistic merit, in American broadcasting, are pretty crude, as many intelligent Americans would be the first to admit. But actually one becomes hardened. That is to say, one learns instinctively to close the mind to them, as you close your mind to a bore launching forth upon some prolix and utterly irrelevant story. In order to discover just how much attention the average listener pays to these commercial blurbs, I have sometimes amused myself when in the United States by questioning friends as to the name of the product advertised on radio programmes featuring the most widely known radio artistes, almost invariably with completely negative results. I am not suggesting that radio advertising on American lines would commend itself to the mentality of British wireless audiences. But, from long experience of American radio, I consider that the commercial 'blurb' is a relatively minor nuisance to endure by comparison with the superlatively high average standard of programmes.

Sir John Reith, the arbiter of British radio destinies, figured in a funny incident that occurred at the opening of the Inter-

national Radio Conference which was held in New York while I was there – on the invitation of my friend, John Elwood, at that time Vice-President in charge of Education at the National Broadcasting Company, I attended the inaugural meeting. The arrangement was that, at 11 p.m., after the formal speeches, President Hoover should broadcast a message to the Conference from the White House at Washington, for which purpose an enormous loud-speaker had been erected behind the speakers' table. Sir John Reith, who had come especially from London for the occasion, addressed the Conference in a speech in which he made it abundantly clear that, however much sponsored radio programmes might appeal to Americans, they were not to British taste. The Federal Minister of Labour followed briefly and then, in an expectant hush, it was announced that we were being switched over to Washington. The next moment, instead of the awaited impressively spoken introduction, 'The President of the United States!' a stentorian voice, syrupy and ingratiating, boomed from the loud-speaker: 'Why not go *now* to your neighbourhood grocery store and purchase a . . .'

A spontaneous roar of laughter from all over the hall drowned the remainder of the announcement – the interruption seemed to underline so pat the vigorous, not to say dogmatic, exposition which the Conference had heard from Britain's radio Czar. A faintly saturnine smile slowly spread itself over Sir John Reith's features as the audience broke into rapturous applause. The explanation of the incident was that it wanted one minute to eleven and we had caught the sign-off of one of the evening programmes relayed to Washington.

I have always believed that sound is one of the most dramatic means for conveying suspense. I remember how successfully Forbes-Robertson used a banging door on the stage to whip up the tension in the murder scene in his production of *Macbeth* and, of course, 'noises off' are a commonplace of stagecraft for enhancing dramatic effect. Then as now, sketches bulked largely in American radio offerings and in studying their technique, I perceived that one of the secrets of

effective play-writing for broadcasting purposes is to leave as much as possible to the imagination of the listener. A classical example of what I mean was furnished by a line in one of the famous Amos 'n' Andy sketches. The scene was announced as 'The Offices of the Fresh-Air Taxi Corporation of Harlem', one of the many schemes launched by the undefeatable coloured couple to get the better of the current hard times or what Amos called 'Ole Man Ree-pression'. 'Brother Crawford', the coloured lawyer and one of the principal cronies of the two inseparables, who calls to inspect their new headquarters, is greeted by Andy with a cheery, 'Why, hello, Brother Crawford! Pull up dat box an' set down!' The disclosure that at the offices of 'the Fresh-Air Taxi Corporation of Harlem' orange boxes were used as chairs gave in a flash a picture of the miserable shack in which, despite its high-sounding name, the latest venture of the invincible optimists was housed.

It seemed to me that an effective 'thriller', its suspense based as far as possible on the use of sound, could be written for broadcasting. A chance encounter with Margaret Cuthbert, the very charming and intelligent woman who runs the Talks Department of the National Broadcasting Company, put me in touch with John Elwood, who in turn passed me on to John Royal, Programme Director of the N.B.C. and one of the best-known figures in American radio, to whom I submitted my idea. Royal jumped at it: would I go ahead and write something to play for not longer than half an hour?

I already had the nucleus of a plot, the idea of a murderer whose presence should be revealed by the fact that his shoes squeaked. My wife and I sat down and in three weeks produced *Moon Maiden*, a half-hour 'thriller' about a homicidal maniac in squeaky shoes, who goes to an English county hall in the place of his (sane) twin brother. It was quite an elaborate sketch with about twenty speaking parts and we wrote it with the aid of a dictaphone, for timing purposes but also to gauge the effectiveness of our use of sound for working up suspense. My friend, Rupert Grayson, author of the *Gun Cotton* novels, who had been in the Irish Guards with me,

was in New York at the time and the three of us, my wife, Rupert and I, went over and over the thing repeatedly in front of the dictaphone, distributing the different rôles between us and playing each scene back after we had spoken it.

Royal accepted *Moon Maiden* at sight, but somewhat curbed my enthusiasm by insisting that I should play the leading man's part, a dual rôle doubling the two brothers, the mad one and the sane one – he thought it would be original to present a professional writer of 'shockers' in his own 'thriller' sketch. Reflecting that, as long as I were not seen, it would not be so much of an ordeal, I agreed; but I required a lot of coaching by my wife who played the part of the heroine and, thanks to her beautiful voice and the effective use she made of it, revealed unsuspected talents for radio work. *Moon Maiden* went on the air over a coast-to-coast broadcast at 11 p.m. on April 7, 1931, and was so successful that Royal engaged us to write and act in three more sketches. These were *The King's Messenger*, *Mata Hari The Spy*, and *The Mummy Hand*. If the innumerable letters we received from all over the United States were evidence, the plays appealed to the American radio audience: if they were not actually the first, they were among the first sketches of their kind to be broadcast.

As the result of this not inauspicious start the N.B.C. put me on the air on Sundays for eighteen weeks with a programme of my devising which I called my 'Gallery of Famous Britons'. This featured each week a personal impression of a different British celebrity, all the way from King George and the Prince of Wales, via George Bernard Shaw (I sent him a copy of my broadcast about him and he replied on a postcard, from a Union Castle liner, 'Heaven forgive you!') and James M. Barrie, to General Smuts. Meanwhile, through the late Elizabeth Marbury, the well-known play-broker, my wife and I had placed the play we had based upon one of my Clubfoot novels, *The Crouching Beast* (we wrote it originally for the late Sir Gerald du Maurier, but that charming but incalculable creature fought shy of the German atmosphere at the last moment). The play was ultimately done on Broadway. They insisted on changing the title, as well as most of the play. They called

it *Berlin*: *Berlin* for short, but not for long, for it perished ingloriously after a three-weeks' run. The part of the heroine was enacted by a delightful young American actress, a lovely natural blonde, whom my wife and I had seen in Philip Merivale's New York revival of *Death Takes a Holiday*. As the result of her appearance in our play she was given a film test and is now a leading actress in Hollywood – I speak of Helen Vinson, who married the British lawn tennis ace, Fred Perry. As the Germans say, *Nichts ist umsonst*.

In consequence of these various activities our stay in America became insensibly prolonged. More than once we had reached the point of booking our homeward passage, but inevitably some fresh development arose to postpone it. Now it was an offer from Hollywood – I had several, but none ever fructified, possibly because I did not follow them up with sufficient vigour, but the idea of a writer's cubicle on a Hollywood lot never really attracted me and I found being my own task-master as much as I could cope with – now a proposal to collaborate on a story in which the *Saturday Evening Post* was interested. This last suggestion resulted in *Fog*, which I wrote in collaboration with Dorothy Sims, herself a bridge player and writer of repute and wife of Hal Sims, one of the greatest bridge experts in the world.

We all had a lot of fun out of this story which turned upon a series of mysterious homicides on the Eastern crossing of a transatlantic liner. It took two months to write and during this period (August to October 1932) my wife and I were put up at the bridge club belonging to the Hal Sims at Deal, New Jersey, where they had a most attractive seaside home. The Sims house was in some sense the headquarters of American bridge and during our stay at Deal we came into contact with almost all the greatest American contract players, not to mention bridge teachers, bridge writers and others connected with this thriving American industry. Neither my wife nor I play bridge – in this respect we were certainly unique among those frequenting the Deal Club – and I have often wondered what the bridgites made of us, for your hundred per cent bridge expert, as I studied the type in those two months, eats, drinks,

talks and dreams bridge day for day, 365 days in the year. However, my freedom from this particular vice was all to the good, for, apart from a plunge into the Atlantic rollers before breakfast and a game of tennis before dinner, I had no incentive to forsake my typewriter, with the result that the story quickly took shape and, what is more, was eventually accepted by the *Saturday Evening Post* for serialisation. It still gives me, fanatical as I am about technical accuracy in crime stories, a glow of satisfaction to reflect that such experts as Hal Sims, Sir Derrick Wernher and Waldemar von Zedtwitz vetted the description of the bridge game in the smoke-room of the liner which occurs in *Fog*. The point was that we wanted to give the reader a hint as to the killer's identity by means of a subtle piece of sharp practice he performed at the bridge table. Without skilled aid I should never have risked it, but Dorothy Sims, who is nothing if not determined, promptly commandeered all the experts within call.

As I turn the pages of my American diaries, I am conscious of some names standing out above others, by reason of the personality attaching to them. There was the late Elizabeth (whom her friends called 'Bessie') Marbury, who often entertained us at her little house at 13 Sutton Place. It was she and her friend, Anne Morgan, daughter of the great J.P., who had first made this derelict waterfront district on the Upper East Side fashionable (it is the quarter figuring in the play *Dead End*). The daughter of the last Chancellor of New York and intimately associated with Tammany, Elizabeth Marbury had been in her time the most famous play agent in the country, representing many celebrated authors. She was past seventy when, soon after my arrival in New York, I first met her, an enormous woman who must have weighed eighteen stone. But, notwithstanding her size, her flow of energy and vitality was unimpaired. She was an amazingly good talker, cynical, witty, hard-boiled, tough – it was impossible to think of her as an old woman as she sat at the head of her luncheon-parties or in the big chair in the corner of her drawing-room at her Sunday teas, uttering one 'wisecrack' after the other. She had very

little belief in human nature – maybe, as the result of her long experience of Broadway producers: if she feared nobody, it was equally certain that she did not care for anybody very much. She was good at repartee. One day an English visitor was admiring the view of the East River from her windows, with Welfare Island and its romantic-looking prison buildings spread out below, a Whistleresque scene on a winter's day that always took me back in imagination to Petrograd, with the menacing silhouette of the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul looming greyly through the brume across the Neva. But Welfare Island and its pinnacles put Miss Marbury's London guest in mind of Westminster. 'They're very beautiful,' he remarked, 'they're like miniature Houses of Parliament.' 'Yeah,' retorted 'Bessie' in her rather croaking voice, 'but with the difference that those chaps over there know they're going to stay.'

One afternoon at her house I met the two Tammany bosses, Curry and McCooey, who had come from the funeral of old Vorhuis, a Tammany veteran who had died at the age of 102. At that time Tammany Hall still ruled supreme in New York and I knew that these two men between them virtually controlled all the essential services of the city. I found them singularly unimpressive, recalling to my mind the types of small-town tradesmen I used to meet in the Ireland of my youth. Curry, small, nattily dressed, amiable but reserved, with white hair and a cold blue eye, might have been a prosperous auctioneer or corn-chandler. McCooey, the Brooklyn boss, was a more blatant specimen, short and fat and plebeian, who looked like a publican or a small builder dressed for Sunday church. Within a very few years of that tea-party all three of these old Tammany fighters, 'Bessie' Marbury, Curry and McCooey, were dead, and to-day (1937) Tammany has had most of its power wrested from it by the growing supremacy of the Italians and the Jews, vested in the redoubtable person of Mayor La Guardia.

From time to time on Sunday mornings we used to drop in for breakfast with Alexander Woollcott, essayist and wit, who also lived on the East River, not many blocks away from Sutton

Place. Plump and chuckling and robed in one of a series of bright-hued silk dressing-gowns which he changed from time to time as the day wore on, the amiable author of *While Rome Burns*, with the assistance of his coloured servant, Junior, would regale with ham and eggs and coffee, followed by cocktails later on, the intelligentsia of the town. In his big, book-lined living-room overlooking the water, we would meet at various times headliners as differently celebrated as Noel Coward, George Kaufman, Miriam Hopkins, Harpo Marx or Dorothy Parker. At first sight Dorothy Parker, such a pallid, sad-eyed, taciturn little thing, usually sunk in gloom, by no means lives up to her deserved reputation of possessing the most mordant wit in the United States. Her *mots* are famous, as, for instance, when she spoke of a Hollywood star who had essayed, not very successfully, to win stage laurels, as 'running the whole gamut of the emotions from A to B' or when she entitled her review in *The New Yorker* of the late Lou Telle-gen's memoirs (which dealt largely with his successes with the fair sex) 'Kiss-and-Tellegen'.

A trip to the Middle West in 1934 to speak at Book Fairs simultaneously held at Pittsburg, Cleveland and Detroit gave me my eagerly awaited chance to meet and talk with Henry Ford. This world figure, who has revolutionised the face of the globe by resolutely tackling the transport system, is not easy to see, but my friend, William Adams Simonds, who is head of Ford's Greenfield Village outside Detroit, arranged it. I found the great man curiously disappointing. He has force and energy far beyond his years, with an autocratic character which imposes itself all through the vast plants he controls. It may sound a contradiction in terms, but he seemed to me to be lacking in personality. He is shy, evasive, an eldritch type, whose favourite attitude is to sit with one knee clasped between his hands and dragged almost up to his chin, wriggling while he talks, and some of his judgments struck me as being singularly unbalanced. In his puritanical outlook which frowns upon smoking and drinking (he himself indulges in neither and smoking is not permitted in his private offices at Dearborn), the simplicity of his personal tastes (he lives mainly on

vegetables), his encouragement of such innocent pleasures as dancing (he often attends the weekly hops held for the employees of the Dearborn plant and not infrequently takes the floor with Mrs. Ford himself), and his capacity for hero-worship (he has collected, regardless of expense, every relic even remotely associated with the career of his bosom friend and idol, the late Thomas B. Edison, the inventor) he is an American of the soil; but in an America which, in Siegfried's phrase, has 'come of age', he has never grown up. That is why, in the industrial revolution which the Roosevelt reforms have precipitated in the United States, he finds himself in the position of King Canute.

Greenfield Village, adjacent to the Dearborn Works, a charming rural spot, is Henry Ford's own creation. Stamped by the Ford millions out of the flatness of the Michigan plain, with its village green and wooden New England church, its cottages (including a stone one transported bodily from the Cotswolds) displaying the implements of the different cottage industries, and old-fashioned shops, many brought from New England, it is a veritable history of the crafts and contains, among other things, the original court-house where Abraham Lincoln used to plead as a young lawyer, and the original village school which Ford himself attended as a child. I had a nostalgic thrill when I recognised, flanking the clock on the village green, the brightly gilded cast-iron effigies of Gog and Magog, the City of London giants, which I have seen a thousand times striking the hour above Bennett's clock shop beside Bow Church in Cheapside – Ford bought the figures when the premises were demolished and re-erected them at Greenfield. The only automobile allowed within the village precincts is Henry Ford's (he mostly uses a Lincoln): visitors are taken round in venerable-looking, horse-drawn carriages featuring half a dozen types, from a brougham to a barouche, driven by no less venerable-looking liveried coachmen.

Having heard of Henry Ford's interest in 'gadgets' of all kinds, on my return to New York I sent him a patent pencil I had bought in Bond Street with a flange of transparent bakelite at one end to serve as a magnifying glass for decipher-

ing numbers in the telephone directory – I had noticed that he wore glasses for reading. He was delighted with my modest offering (I suppose multi-millionaires are not used to receiving presents): at any rate, he wrote me a personal letter (quite a compliment from him, I was given to understand) saying, 'I have seen pencils put to many ingenious uses, but to none more ingenious than this.'

In July 1933 my wife and I set out by car from New York for Quebec on our way to make the tour of the romantically situated Gaspé Peninsula – it thrusts itself into the ocean from the St. Lawrence River – for the purpose of a new novel I was planning (*Dead Man Manor*, the scene of which is laid in French Canada). As Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt was starting on the same trip with a woman friend a week ahead of us and I had gone to considerable pains to work out details of distances and stopping-places in this rather remote part of the Dominion, Kermit Roosevelt, the late President Theodore Roosevelt's son and her cousin, suggested that, on arriving at Quebec, I should get in touch with Mrs. Roosevelt at the Frontenac Hotel and give her the benefit of my researches. As we had also arranged to stay at the Frontenac – with its unrivalled position high above the Dufferin Terrace overlooking the mighty St. Lawrence at Quebec, it is to my mind one of the most beautifully situated hotels in the world, as it is one of the most comfortable – about nine, the morning after our arrival, I called 'The First Lady' in her suite. She came to the telephone herself. 'We're leaving at eleven,' she told me, 'but come right up!'

This was my first meeting with one of the most-discussed and the most-criticised 'front page' personalities in the United States. To follow Eleanor Roosevelt's restless day-to-day activities in the newspaper – her incessant travels by train, by road, by air, her newspaper articles, her broadcasts – is to have one impression; to meet her is to have quite another. Sincerity and simplicity are her outstanding characteristics. I have encountered many public personages in my time, but never one in Mrs. Roosevelt's exalted position who has remained so

charmingly unaffected, so utterly free from pose and snobbishness. She is a remarkable organiser, or she would never be able to get through her crowded days as she does, and she is a mass of energy. But withal she remains entirely womanly, a gracious, sweet-tempered, kind-hearted woman with the manners of a great lady, a good housewife and an admirable hostess.

Her money-making activities, even though she devotes the proceeds to the many charities in which she is interested, are generally frowned upon in America. But her own attitude on the subject is quite frank. Her husband's tenure of office as President is limited: why then should she not avail herself while she can of the 'news interest' attaching to her position as 'The First Lady', to raise funds for the poor, the ailing and the aged? However much her fellow-countrymen may wrinkle their noses about it, one thing is certain – Mrs. Roosevelt cares nothing for criticism. She has all the moral courage of her convictions.

She is also extraordinarily generous-minded. At the American Pen Women's luncheon at Washington¹ at which I had to speak after her, she went out of her way to say nice things about me and my books, which, she declared, the President read assiduously, a spontaneous gesture which touched me greatly. At this luncheon she asked whether she could do anything for me in Washington. I said (naturally) that I wanted to meet the President and told her that I had brought an introduction to Colonel Marvin McIntyre, the Political Secretary, but McIntyre had been absent from his office all day. 'Go back to the Executive Offices this afternoon,' Mrs. Roosevelt said, 'and if Colonel McIntyre is there, tell him from me that you're coming to tea with me at the White House at five and that he will have to fit you in some time after that.'

Well, I was still unable to locate the elusive Colonel McIntyre after lunch. But at five o'clock I went round to the White House. I had not been five minutes in the small Red Drawing-Room with Mrs. Roosevelt and some other guests when the President in his chair was rolled in by a coloured

¹ See p. 435.

man-servant. Immediately Mrs. Roosevelt took me across and introduced me, then made me sit down beside the President.

He kept me talking to him for nearly an hour and a half.

As things are in the United States to-day (1937), you are one hundred per cent pro- or anti-Roosevelt – there is nothing between. I can speak of him only as he impressed me during that long and intimate conversation we had and in his public acts during the critical years of his first term as President when I was in America. To begin with, the man is first, last and always a fighter – the big head, the square chin, the fearless blue eye, would proclaim it if one did not know of the pluck and tenacity he displayed in combating the attack of infantile paralysis which, as far back as 1919, seemed to put ‘paid’ to all his political ambitions. He has charm, he has diplomacy, he has tact. But he likes to be boss. He is domineering and, if I know the type, he might have a pretty relentless hand at times.

He struck me as being, paradoxically enough, the very exemplification of that ‘rugged individualism’ of America which his reforms have undertaken to extirpate. You meet many captains of industry in the United States of the Roosevelt stamp – courageous, long-headed, good judges of men in so far as they are able to pick subordinates who will blindly identify themselves with their fortunes, fond of pulling strings, with a dash of the gambler thrown in. Somewhere in his works Stephen Leacock has a famous analysis of the American character under the heading of ‘Americans Don’t Care’. He points out that Americans have all kinds of faults, that they are snubbed, patronised, and lectured by Europeans, but ‘they don’t give a damn’. Franklin Roosevelt impresses me as being that kind of American. His critics call him a traitor to his class, Bolshevik, dictator, Czar – and he doesn’t give a damn. A born aristocrat as families go in the United States, he has never had to kowtow socially and nobody has ever been able to ‘high-hat’ him. He can therefore laugh at the decree of excommunication launched against him by Newport society just as, being financially independent, he can afford to ignore

the fulminations of Wall Street. Dexterous enough to have mastered the political game in the hurlyburly of Albany politics when he was Governor of New York (or clever enough to have attached to himself others like the faithful Howe or the astute Farley to master it for him), he raised up 'the forgotten man' and used him as a shield against the most drastic and sustained efforts of Big Business to blast him out of the White House.

There is so much indiscriminate abuse of the President by otherwise intelligent Americans, especially in society, that it is not easy to arrive at an accurate estimate of his true character. The late Mrs. Henry Moskowitz who, as 'Al' Smith's chosen counsellor for many years, enjoyed a high reputation for perspicacity and as an old associate in the Democratic Party knew Roosevelt well, said to me several months before his nomination for the Presidency, 'Franklin has character, but no brains,' a judgment which was probably not entirely unprejudiced in view of the strong rivalry between Smith and Roosevelt for the nomination. Against this, the favourite charge of the President's critics to-day is that he is an able but utterly unscrupulous demagogue, which would seem to imply the opposite, to wit, brains rather than character. A shrewder verdict, likewise emanating from the hostile camp, would appear to be one given to me by a brilliant woman who has known the President all his life: 'Franklin is a charmer but incapable of originating anything. His greatest asset is his wonderful knack of throwing off worry. He will emerge from a regular dog fight without any sign of stress.'

Certainly, when I met the President, though at that time he must have been actively concerned with half a dozen gigantic schemes connected with the New Deal, he betrayed not the slightest symptom of strain. I soon realised that, like any American with his cultural background of Groton and Harvard, he was quite familiar with British life and conditions and had many personal friends in England. Such talks with the President of the United States are privileged, but I do not feel that I am breaking confidence in revealing that our conversation swung all the way from the

Young Guard of the Conservative Party at home to the Crusades, notably the fortresses the Crusaders left in Asia Minor, which have never been properly investigated or excavated, and the weapons and armour, dating from the Crusades, which were picked up on the battlefield of Omdurman and are still occasionally found in the Sudan. The President told me he liked mystery stories and read one every night; he also described to me at length a murder mystery that had occurred in his own Dutchess County (where his country place, Hyde Park, is situated) and which he had personally investigated when Governor of New York, without finding the solution.

Mr. Roosevelt has a merry disposition. His laugh is a shout, a loud 'Hal' He likes his little joke. According to a story current in Washington when I was there on this occasion, he said one day to Frances Perkins, the woman Secretary of State for Labour, 'Frances, I did something for you to-day.' 'What was that, Mr. President?' 'Madam' Perkins asked. 'I signed the brassière code!' was the unexpected reply. President Roosevelt was much amused by an incident that occurred when I presented myself at the White House on the occasion of our meeting. Mrs. Kyes, wife of one of the Senators from Delaware, a Republican, who had not set foot in the White House since the departure of President Hoover, had also been invited to tea and was in the hall when I arrived. Alluding to the recent death of the famous 'Ike' Hoover, Chief Usher at the White House for many years (no relation to the former President), she remarked to the assistant usher who took our names, 'You must miss poor Mr. Hoover terribly!' On which the man, drawing himself up, replied stiffly, 'Thank you, madam, but President Roosevelt is doing quite nicely!'

The President's laugh when we told him about it made the teacups rattle.

President Roosevelt is not 'small town'. He is a citizen of the world, acquainted by reading and travel and contacts of many kinds with a wide range of countries besides his own. He takes that long view of world affairs which, in my experience, is the true index of the statesman. And he is independent-minded. He likes to give the experts their say but, having

heard them, he makes up his mind for himself. In talking to him I did not have the feeling of talking to one whose life had lain remote from the great highway of world affairs that I had with President Coolidge. I do not think it is too much to say that in his appreciation of the rôle which the two great English-speaking peoples are called upon to fill in world affairs his line of thought is indistinguishable from that of our own statesmen. Nor will he suffer his vision to become beclouded by the claptrap of the American yellow press which represents Great Britain as constantly seeking to use the United States to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for us. Likewise I find it impossible to believe that he will ever be stampeded into a tail-twisting expedition against the British Lion for vote-catching purposes, as has happened before now in the history of Democratic Administrations in the United States.

The whole of the President's childhood and early manhood were overshadowed by the prestige of the distant cousin who established himself in history as one of the most forceful and dramatic occupants the White House has ever known. A competent Washington observer has written of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 'manifest determination to become *the* Roosevelt of history' adding, 'He has gained and wielded greater power by two victories at the polls than anything in the record of the other Roosevelt.'¹

Having studied the subject on either side of the Atlantic with some thoroughness, I consider that we British are a good habit for the Americans, just as the Americans are a good habit for us. We can learn with advantage from the tolerance and humanity which Americans display towards each other, while, on the other hand, such British institutions as our administration of justice exert a permanently steadying influence, like a gyroscope in a ship, over the American scene. However critical he may often show himself of our motives, the average American looks to Britain to set a standard of conduct higher in some respects than any he expects from his own government,

¹ J. Frederick Essary. From his article 'Roosevelt Makes History To-day' in the *Daily Express*, January 3, 1938.

and in consequence, is apt to judge any lapse from that standard on the part of Britain much more severely than he would a similar lapse on the part of any other nation.

If a succession of British Cabinets had understood this better, the War Debts question would never have been left in abeyance to brand Britain in American eyes as a defaulter.

I shall always look back with pleasure upon the long periods of time I spent in the United States between the years of 1930 and 1937 (Coronation Year), not only on account of the boundless kindness we encountered, but also by reason of the harvest of interesting experiences I gathered. Life was very full. Besides the broadcasting, there were speaking engagements and lectures. I frequently spoke for my dear friend, the beloved Emma Mills, who has introduced so many British writers to the American public at those 'literary luncheons' which she was the first to start, and in addition made many excursions out of town to address audiences in the East and New England and in the West as far as Chicago.

Crime and the criminal have always been one of my major interests and, as it may be imagined, modern America, gangster-ridden and racket-infested (especially under Prohibition), gave me plenty of opportunity for broadening the personal experience I had gained of the underworld of most European capitals. I was a fairly frequent visitor to the 'line up' at New York Police Headquarters, where criminals are paraded for identification purposes before the assembled plain-clothes detective force.

One memorable morning I rushed down to Center Street, unshaven and half dressed, in time to see the notorious Vincent Coll and his gang who had been arrested the night before paraded. Coll was a young Irish-American gunman who had tried to 'muscle in' on several of New York's established rackets, leaving a trail of blood in his wake. He and four of his retinue, all Italians, appeared at the line up. Two of them were 'trigger men', i.e. hired killers, greasy little Sicilians with nervous gestures and scared eyes—one gave his profession as 'tap-dancer'. Coll was extremely haughty, answering all questions with a disdainful, 'Ask my counsel!' As the prisoners

were about to be led away, Chief Inspector Sullivan, a splendid type of 'honest cop', who was in charge of the proceedings, said to Coll in tones of icy menace, 'As for you, you're headed for a place you should have gone to a long, long while ago, and that's a marble slab with the cold water running over you!'

This direct allusion to the morgue got under the bandit's skin and for the first time his eyes blazed malevolently. But the inspector spoke without the book. The combination of an astute 'mouthpiece', i.e. lawyer, and an intimidated jury secured the gunmen's acquittal on the capital charge and he was set free. But 'the boys' completed what the law had failed to accomplish. A few months later a hired killer belonging to a rival gang almost cut the desperado in half with a 'tommy gun' (a portable machine-gun) in a telephone booth in a Greenwich Village drug store, to which he had been lured by a fake message. Vincent Coll was quite a personable youth, well set up and smartly if rather flashily dressed. But his features were all out of balance – shallow brow, narrow eyes, a rosebud mouth too small for a man with pursed up, sensual lips, red and wet, and an insignificant chin cloven by the deepest dimple I have ever seen.

I put him full length into my New York crime story, *The Clock Ticks On*, as the gunman.

In New York, Chicago, Savannah, wherever the prospects appeared promising, I explored the criminal dives, escorted by detectives or crime reporters. I visited almost every prison in New York State, not only Sing Sing but also the dreaded Dannemora, up near the Canadian border, where the most desperate criminals are sent.

But in America, as in Europe, I still found the common run of crime essentially banal, the average criminal as an individual ineffectual and not particularly interesting.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

WHAT MY EYES HAVE SEEN

FOR the first part of my career I recorded life as it is; now as a novelist I am free to depict it as I want it to be. To a greater or smaller extent all novels represent what the psycho-analysts call 'wish-fulfilment' on the part of their authors. In my case this is certainly true, for as far back as I can remember my imagination always turned to adventure and, in rather a morbid fashion, to crime.

If childhood influences count for anything, the Ripper murders in London certainly had a bearing on the trend I followed when I turned to fiction. I was only a little boy at the time and Diddie, our old nurse, who was with the family for thirty-eight years, would not talk about them in front of us children. But I used to hear our two maids gossiping in awestruck whispers in the kitchen as to how Jack the Ripper had 'done another pore gel in', and I would stand, in mingled fear and excitement, before the *Police Gazette* hung up outside the newspaper shops, with a large line drawing on its front page depicting a beautifully corsetted young woman sinking to the pavement in a lake of blood with a fearsome-looking man with handle-bar moustaches and glittering eyes, gleefully stooping over her with an enormous carving-knife.

It was an age in which even the staidest newspapers, like *The Times* and the *Standard* – the *Daily Telegraph* was considered rather 'popular' and therefore could afford to be sensational – reported murder cases at full length. There was much talk of crime below stairs at our house, especially of a certain Mrs. 'Ogg who slew her friend Mrs. Percy and Mrs. Percy's baby, and trundled the dead bodies of her victims half across London in the baby's perambulator; and gloatings over

the reports of hangings (*'The condemned man made a hearty breakfast and after receiving the ministrations of the prison chaplain, walked with a steady step to the scaffold. The drop was pulled at 9.3 a.m. Death was instantaneous. Billington was the executioner.'*)

I was one of the generation of children who waited breathlessly every month for the *Strand* to appear with a further instalment of 'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' – I wonder if any magazine series ever had such a vogue as that. The *Strand* was marked 6d. on the cover, but for some reason known only to the publishing trade, you paid 4½d. for it at the stationer's. Sherlock Holmes set me off at the age of ten or eleven upon a regular course of crime fiction. Wilkie Collins; Miss Braddon; Mrs. Henry Wood; Dick Donovan; Arthur Morrison's *Martin Hewitt, Investigator* (following the Sherlock Holmes vogue); and Emile Gaboriau in an English edition rather shamefacedly labelled *The Sensational Novels of Gaboriau*. Poe, who was the father of all detective story writers, rather bored me at the time, I remember: I found even his *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, with the elaborate verbatim transcriptions of evidence, pretty hard going.

We have advanced since the days when, to buy a book of Gaboriau's it was necessary to go down Holywell Street where his works were displayed side by side with *The Memoirs of Cora Pearl* and *The Adventures of Maria Monk*. But I still wonder to find the literary editors lumping detective novels, good, bad or indifferent, in one column for review while novels falling outside the crime category are reviewed on their merits. For, without unduly blowing the trumpet of the detective story writer as a class, I do not hesitate to assert, with English literature at its present low pass, that to-day some of the most conscientious work, from the point of view of construction and writing, is being put into crime fiction.

I feel that I am entitled to my say on this subject for, having published both romantic novels and detective stories, I know how incomparably harder the latter are to write. The technique of crime fiction is relentless – the comparatively large number of indifferent mystery novels published shows how

relentless. A murder story has to move. It may slow up after, but it must start at speed. Thus the crime novelist is confronted with two alternatives at the outset. He may show his appointed victim dead, or he may prefer to cast suspicion on the other characters in advance by taking the victim alive through a few chapters. Personally, I consider the latter plan to be more artistic and dramatically more effective – it cannot but enhance the dramatic value of the murder if the identity of the victim comes as a surprise to the reader, with still greater force if the author has taken the trouble to build up the character of the murderee.

But the murder must not be too long delayed. That is axiomatic. A crime novel is a story about a murder: it loses its whole *raison d'être* if the murder is not placed well to the front of the book. The ordinary novelist has all the space he wants in which to develop his characters. Not so the crime novelist. He is sharply circumscribed by the limits of an inexorable technique. He must portray his characters, etch in his background and precipitate his tragedy in not more than the first ten thousand words, at the most. The greater economy he can achieve in this respect, the greater his skill. Modern American detective story writers have solved this difficulty by the adroit use of dialogue, relying on dialogue rather than contrived incident or descriptions to present their leading characters briefly but adequately.

As a murder story is about a murder, so the unravelling of the crime must be its predominating feature. There is a school, to which I do not adhere, claiming that a love interest has no place in a mystery novel. But love interest or no love interest, there must be a leading character beside the investigator, whether the latter be an amateur or a professional: my point is that the unfortunate crime novelist has two heroes on his hands, his leading character and the sleuth. Both are continually striving for first place in the story and between their rival claims it is often the deuce of a job to keep the narrative bowling briskly along. If the sleuth be an amateur, the case is even worse. For plausibility's sake, you have to bring in the police; but, with an amateur investigator in the

offing, Scotland Yard, even as a comedy foil, is apt to prove redundant and, in consequence, a drag on the speed of the story. I feel so strongly on this subject that in one novel of mine, *The Portcullis Room*, the story of a murder in a castle on a remote Scottish island, I shortcircuited this difficulty by having the island cut off by stormy seas so that the police arrived from the mainland only after the murderer had been spotted and the hero and heroine were safe in one another's arms.

Another aspect of the mystery story in which technique counts heavily is in the matter of the disclosure of information to the reader. The danger of the anticlimax looms large over every mystery story. The narrative should mount, always gathering pace to a peak, which is the unmasking of the murderer—anything beyond this *dénouement* is in the nature of an anticlimax. That type of final chapter, or even chapters, which we know so well, with its interminable explanations, its gloatings of amateur over professional, its backslappings and wedding bells, is an abomination if too prolonged or too involved. The author who knows his job will have dribbled out sufficient hints to the reader as he goes along to enable the ultimate solution to be unfolded clearly and with reasonable brevity.

The first thing a reporter learns is to tell his story in his opening sentence. This is not a bad recipe for a crime novel. A murder yarn, like a news story, must have a beginning, a middle and an end, and both have a further similarity in this that, if badly told, people won't read 'em—they fall into the class of what in newspaper make-up Northcliffe used to call 'a don't read me'. Newspaper work calls for the constant application of the deductive processes of the mind which explains why many authors have graduated from daily journalism to grapple with the complicated technique of the mystery story. Its form is elastic and lends itself to constant experiment. If mystery stories are fun to read, they are no less fun to write.

It has been a long journey to the quiet desk, where, like a caravan leader between caravans, I sit and rake over my bales,

while waiting for the next convoy to take the road. The world has altered out of all recognition since I first set out. The span of my life up till now has coincided with changes greater and more fundamental than my father witnessed in his. Institutions and ideas which in the eyes of my generation appeared to be age-defying have been swept away: others which we believed to have been destroyed for ever have been called back into being. In war, riots and political strife I have learnt that 'never' is a word to be used by the historian as sparingly as garlic in a salad dressing. The salient feature of progress is not so much the changes it brings, as the impermanence of many of such changes.

It is the lesson of history. Charles II and the licence of the Restoration trod hard upon the heels of Cromwell and his Puritans: the blood that drenched France to purge the land of tyrants was spilt to make way for Napoleon. The Third Republic of France was the 'popular' monarchy of Napoleon III recast in Republican mould and so remains to this day: National Socialism in Germany is Hohenzollern Imperialism no longer hampered by the Federal idea which even the mighty Bismarck was powerless to abolish; while under Comrade Stalin Russia has reverted to her status of an Oriental Power ruled by a dictator who differs from the former autocrats of All the Russias only in that he governs a Socialist instead of a bureaucratic state.

Not nations, but ideas, are to-day in conflict. The fearful bitterness of the religious wars of the Middle Ages has been revived in Europe. To decide whether man should worship in the Catholic or in the Reformation way Germany was harried with fire and sword for thirty years: three centuries later, the same fate is befalling Spain in order to determine whether Lenin is the true God or Mussolini. The firing squad has taken the place of the *auto da fe*: the War that was to end all wars has brought us to not only in Spain but also in China the indiscriminate slaughter of women and children, butchered in the names of two rival schools of thought. The world made safe for democracy proves to be a world in which democracy's most urgent problem is how to continue to live among the

bombs rained down upon it impartially by Fascism and Communism alike.

It is a materialistic age. Not the priest and the thinker, but the chemist, the engineer and the bacteriologist, are moulding the minds of the people. Science applied to war slays more swiftly and more economically, but at the same time combats disease more effectively and prolongs the expectancy of life. Labour-saving machinery reduces manual toil to a minimum: space is annihilated; and speech, music and pictures mechanically recorded supply the artistic needs of the mob on mass production lines. Man has conquered the air, made electricity, the ether, his bond-slave. But, like the fisherman in the Arabian Nights, he has ended by himself becoming enslaved by the djinn. The machine has become our master.

Since the War ended, the resolve which the fighting man brought with him from the trenches to make England a better and a happier place for everybody has made encouraging headway. The standard of living has been immeasurably improved; and with it, many attendant ills have been progressively sloughed off, slums, insanitary conditions, infant mortality, drunkenness, so that to-day I scarcely recognise some of the poorer parts of the London I knew in my youth. The great crisis in the heavy industries is being slowly overcome: unemployment is being resolutely tackled at last; and the masses enjoy better living conditions, better working conditions, better health and a larger share of the good things of life than at any previous period in our history.

But these achievements are all on the material side. What of the other? I find the picture confused. Like the builders whom we suffer to tear down our Georgian houses and replace them with vast apartment rookeries, without a thought of what effect this transformation of a nation of householders into a nation of flat-dwellers will have upon the racial character, we have overthrown many citadels, caring nothing for the outcome. The B.B.C. with its pinchbeck culture is our feeble reply to the crass materialism of Hollywood, distorting the values of the masses with its parade of luxury, its perpetual pandering to money, its lewd pipe-dreams of Oriental ghettos.

We have scrapped old standards without finding new ones to take their place. Because we, the older generation, are smitten with the materialism of the age, we make a show of respecting the rising generation's claim to make a cockshy of all the old standards, whereas the truth is that our own moral constitution is already so undermined by the *maladie du siècle* that we have already renounced them, and we are too busy money-grubbing, or too weak, to give youth a lead. If dwindling congregations be a proof, the churches have failed us; and as for our political masters the only branch of the government which can be relied on to know its own mind and pursue its ends unswervingly is the Income Tax.

Lack of leadership means a lack of leaders; and the gravest danger in British politics to-day is the absence of any personality calculated to inflame and capture the mind of youth. We are marching out of the dark valley of the depression, but as an army without banners. Yet never in the history of our race was there such bitter need for leadership, when the essence of our future existence as a nation is menaced by unscrupulous and powerful forces, whose strength lies in the very tenaciousness wherewith they pursue their object.

We sit in judgment on Edward VIII. But are we not all in a measure to blame for the abdication? His apprenticeship was served in an England which was shedding, if not without protest, with effective resistance by those who should have defended them, those ideals of conduct upon which the foundations of England's greatness were well and truly laid. At heart the country was sound, as the abdication crisis revealed, but on the surface the England of the post-War years revealed herself as a phantasmagoria of mixed values and crumbling ideals, half Hollywood, half Moscow, where degeneracy ruled the arts, the new rich aped the profligacy and extravagance but not the solid virtues of the old aristocracy they replaced, where Conservatives posed as Socialists and Socialists burned incense to Moscow, where parents neglected their children and children laughed at parental authority.

We built up the Prince of Wales. We adulated him for his many splendid qualities. A great and glorious reign was

prophesied for him because we discerned in him a readiness to break with old traditions, a trend which exactly corresponded with the modern frenzy to destroy. In the chaos of shattered standards the barriers were not perceived which the wisdom of our fathers set up about the person of the Lord's Anointed.

Was Edward alone to blame if he took the unthinking masses at their word and believed that he might shape his private life as other men? The British Press, with its great and glorious traditions of plain and courageous speech, could have warned him; but it held its peace. Wrongly, if not disastrously, to my mind. The freedom of the Press is a bilateral contract. Not only does it enshrine one of the most precious of our liberties, but it also imposes on the Press the duty to use its power at need to lead and guide the people. The sensational exploitation of divorce suits in the published reports gave our legislators an eagerly seized opportunity to curb the freedom of our newspapers in this direction, and the recent outcry against the invasion of private life by the Press may end in further restrictions. Apart from other considerations, the refusal of the newspapers to face the facts about a situation which was being trumpeted from the housetops in every country except Great Britain created a dangerous precedent. It may yet recoil upon their heads when some future government, for reasons of its own, wishes to muzzle Fleet Street.

Half a century ago widespread attention was roused on both sides of the Atlantic by an imaginative American novel, in which the author Edward Bellamy projected himself forward into the world of the future: *Looking Backward* was the title. Among the boons conferred by the Socialist State pictured by the writer was music sent into the houses by telephone from a central station. Visionaries from Leonardo da Vinci downward predicted the steam engine, the conquest of the air and the submarine, but this is the only instance I know of in which broadcasting, the most stupendous of all modern inventions in its political and sociological potentialities, is foreshadowed. No farther back than a year or two after the War, when the *Daily Mail* broadcasted one of the earliest wireless concerts, from

The Hague, with Melba as the star, no one foresaw the unlimited possibilities of radio broadcasting, the most important invention which I have seen in my life up to the present.

The radio is in process of revolutionising the whole art of government. Up to a very recent time, to gain the people's ear, a government had only Parliament, the Press and the political platform at its disposal. It thus reached a minority of the nation, a minority, however, which for all practical purposes was centred at home. But through the radio a government has access to all the people everywhere and its audiences are reckoned by millions where they numbered thousands before. In the last Presidential election in the United States, it was President Roosevelt's natural gift for broadcasting and the intelligent use his organisers made of the radio that gave him the greatest majority an American President has ever had. It is the radio which, in Germany and Italy, keeps the dictators in business: it was the radio which, by securing the instant attention of the whole Empire for Mr. Stanley Baldwin at the time of the abdication was instrumental in bringing the British Commonwealth through the greatest crisis in its history.

On the reverse side of the medal, it may yet be the radio that will again plunge the world into war.

A generation whose mind is being progressively standardised by the machine age responds favourably to the standardisation of speech and outlook. With an extensive firsthand acquaintance with American broadcasting programmes, I am not impressed by the B.B.C.; but I do recognise that standardisation postulates a fixed pattern and that, inevitably, this pattern must lie midway between the upper and lower levels of listeners-in, that is to say, in the central brackets, somewhere between the lower-middle- and middle-class standard of education. The curiously stilted enunciation of the average British radio announcer jars upon the ear trained to the more euphonic and easier English of our educated classes while, at the other end of the scale, it contrasts no less strongly with the vigorous idiom and characteristic dialect of Cockney or yokel. But we cannot escape the fact that to-day the voice from Broadcasting House is the focal point of millions of

placid British lives. Human nature being essentially imitative, a decade or so of broadcasting has already set up a pattern upon which the rising generation is instinctively modelling its speech.

When I was a youngster horses used to go half crazy at the sight of a motor-car. Now horses are born already car-broken. On the night before King George VI's Coronation I broadcasted to the United States a description of the street scenes as I viewed them from the roof of Westminster Hospital, across the road from the Abbey. I could not help reflecting as I stood at the microphone in the open, with the noise of the assembling Coronation crowds echoing from below, that the words I was speaking were being air-borne across the Atlantic wastes in fewer fractions of a second than news took days to travel by the old Cunarders in my father's 'prentice years in journalism. It seemed like a miracle to me; as, of course, it is.

But what seems a miracle to me and my contemporaries, to the young generation is a commonplace of life, as the railway train and electric light were to us. The modern world is radio conscious, which means that it is an entirely different world from any we have known. Already in America the wireless set is as much an adjunct of the home as the bathroom, and the same condition is on its way to obtaining here. Young England looks to the radio for its entertainment and, in moments of national crisis, for its guidance. Life goes on to the accompaniment of wireless. The radio brings news and views and entertainment into the Mayfair mansion and the crofter's cabin impartially and when presently the development of television adds news photos and pictorial programmes as a regular feature, a good part of the present functions of the newspaper, the screen, and the theatre will be usurped. Radio broadcasting, still in its infancy, is one of the greatest undeveloped forces in the modern world.

If we would realise what manner of weapon this is that the hand of man has forged, let us think what a spiritual leader like Martin Luther, a military genius like Napoleon, a statesman like Bismarck, could have done with the radio. I foresee the ultimate possibility of its dislocating the whole system of

party government in England through the advantage it confers upon the party in office. A Prime Minister who takes the trouble to study the psychology of radio audiences and to master the peculiar knack of effective broadcasting will start with odds on. In direct contact with the mass mind, he can explain his policies, answer his critics, forestall attacks and sway opinion, all without leaving his chair in Downing Street.

The infinity of space enveloping the new world I look out upon to-day rings with the voices of nation calling to nation through the ether. That the messages they radiate as often as not are of war rather than peace is but part of the paradox whereby, at a stage in the history of civilisation where science has brought the peoples of the earth into closer contact than ever before, nationalism is rampant on a scale unparalleled for centuries. The War which was to have made the world safe for democracy is seen in the upshot to have achieved the very opposite result. What it actually accomplished was to enable the victor Powers to impose their ideals of democracy upon peoples who never wanted democracy and did not know what to do with it when they had it. Of this ill-matched mating of democracy with militarism, Fascism and National Socialism were born. Nevertheless, though President Wilson failed in his attempt to democratise the world, at least the War welded the democracy of the free peoples into an amalgam strong enough to resist the growing encroachments of dictatorship.

The arms race which precipitated the catastrophe of 1914 is in full swing again. But the millions still living who saw the horrors of war and realised its futility as a solution of international problems are on the watch. I doubt whether even the bugles of Fascism will inspire the youth of Italy and Germany to take up arms as eagerly, as unquestioningly, as did the youth of Europe in 1914. The League of Nations was a noble conception which one day, as surely as to-morrow's sun will rise, will shed immortal lustre upon the now almost forgotten name of its author. To-day it is behind a cloud. Woodrow Wilson's insistence that the Covenant should be incorporated

in the Versailles Treaty identified it in the eyes of the vanquished nations while the whole trend of this ill-conceived and vindictive peace and its history did little to dissipate this belief until the Abyssinian crisis finally exposed, not only its ineffectiveness, but also its inherent dangers.

Yet it seems to me, as I travel about in the world to-day, that the League has accomplished something. A new sense of international consciousness is stirring, which certainly did not exist before. I discern it behind the steel and concrete forts, the tanks and armoured planes, the anti-aircraft batteries, where the nations in arms confront each other. Between Great Britain and Germany, for example, I detect a new-found sympathy, a mutual respect born of the closer knowledge the two peoples gained of one another in the trenches, which was notably lacking in the years before the War. This friendlier feeling comes piercing through the average Englishman's uncompromising rejection of most of the Nazi catechism; and, but for Nazi intolerance, particularly as expressed in the shameful persecution of Germany's Jewish citizens, it would ripen easily to a political entente, greatly to the benefit of the world's peace.

But of all the political changes these eyes of mine have witnessed one of the most important and the most encouraging I consider to be the growth of a closer understanding on *natural lines* between ourselves and America. Anglo-American relations have suffered in the past from the circumstances that the average Englishman is taught no American history at school: on the other hand, every American schoolboy is thoroughly familiar with the Revolution of 1776 and the War of 1812. The Englishman is rarely aware of what Owen Wister called 'the ancient grudge' until he comes up against it; and he is apt to attribute to everything but the true cause a certain misgiving with which all Americans traditionally regard British protestations of friendship. If this misunderstanding is rapidly dissolving it is because the two countries have realised that their interests, and the peace of the world in general, depend on a closer understanding between the two great English-speaking peoples and a sympathetic realisation of one another's problems.

In thus reducing the case to its barest terms I am aware that I am not taking into account that great mass of American citizens of Anglo-Saxon stock who look to England with pride and even affection as the source of their origin, their speech and their literature, and the cradle of the principles of the American Revolution. But when you speak of America, you are speaking of a welter of many races, and in the eyes of America in general, Great Britain is a foreign country. The more significant, therefore, when the growth of a friendlier feeling is based on practical grounds.

The interests of Great Britain and America are identical everywhere in the world to-day. The two nations stand for peace, whether it is imperilled by Japanese Imperialism in the Far East or in Europe by the challenge of Fascism and Communism, which are divided in all things save only in their rejection of Liberal principles: Great Britain and America stand for peace because they recognise that war is the deadliest threat to the democracy of the English-speaking peoples. Neither country has any thought of an alliance because an understanding of this kind, based on the community of speech, of thought and interest, is worth any number of entangling political instruments. The two great democracies hold together because they believe that upon the continuance of those Liberal institutions which are their contribution to the happiness and security of man the peace of the world depends.

In the course of my life I have heard much of the progressive Americanisation of England as though it were wholly a bad thing. Of the Hollywood influence I will only say that nowhere has it been more violently denounced than in America; and if it be true that American films are corrupting our pure English speech, I can only reply that all my life I have been using American slang, without being aware that my literary or conversational style, such as it is, is any the worse for it. It was Henry Ford, an American, who first gave our white collar class the key to the fields, who, by pointing the way to cheaper transport, revolutionised English life and made an invaluable contribution to the better and happier England. America

sent us cheaper and more numerous bathrooms, suction sweepers and frigidaires, typewriters, gramophones and dictaphones; and if our builders have adopted American methods, I can only say it would be better for the future of England if, going the whole hog, they had also imported more of American town-planning ideas.

Having spent five or six years of my life in the United States I should like to observe that, simultaneously with the Americanisation of England, the States are being anglicised. The British influence on contemporary American life has always been strong and with constantly improving communications, it is becoming yearly more marked. In new political ideas, in social legislation, in literature, in the theatre, in social life, there is a continual reflection of British thought, British ways. It may surprise some people to learn that *Punch*, than which there is nothing more essentially British, enjoys a large circulation in America, while British biscuits, British jam, British pickles and sauces, British leather goods and British clothes – all sorts of wearing apparel for men, sports' clothes and woollen goods for women – are everywhere to be met with. To be English in this sense is to be fashionable.

I would go so far as to say that the Americanisation of England might be advantageously extended. A little more of the free-and-easy democracy of the Americans in their relations to one another would do no harm if it rid us of some of the pretentious snobbishness which is still one of the gravest national failings: our Dominions would heartily approve. We might take a leaf from the American book in the matter of splendidly equipped national schools, town-planning and the intelligent prevision and handling of traffic problems, the prenatal care of mothers, the lavish endowment of hospitals and centres of medical research. The experience of history has been that the United States usually lags about twenty years behind the development of political ideas over here. In the trade-union movement, in the introduction of women's suffrage and workmen's insurance, they followed our lead. At present America is experiencing widespread labour trouble similar to that which, in years past in England, ultimately brought about

the adjustment of the relations between capital and labour on a satisfactory basis.

But in other respects President Roosevelt has captured the initiative for America. Already his New Deal has powerfully influenced advanced thought in Europe, as we shall discover when Labour comes back to office in England. Meanwhile, his reforms, so savagely combated by American 'big business', have done much to protect the investment public, and the national weal in general, against a recurrence of the disastrous collapse of 1929. Our rulers have not been so wise. The City plods on in the same old way and the returning wave of prosperity has brought with it the same pack of ravenous sharks to prey unchecked on the small investor as they preyed before. If we can learn from America to guard in the fat years against the coming of the lean, let us have a little more Americanisation, say I.

The fact that, from the traditionalist British point of view, certain aspects of the growing American influence in this country are disagreeably prominent, should not blind our eyes to the mutual benefits to be derived from this active exchange of ideas. Our two countries have much to learn from one another, and the closer relationship proportionately strengthens the influence of the English-speaking peoples in favour of peace. Dark clouds obscure the view as I pause on the long, steep road I have followed to look back. But two peaks rise in majesty through the mist—the British Commonwealth of Nations, emerging in greater strength and unity from the two most perilous crises in our history, and Anglo-American friendship, mighty mountain of the same range.

I do not believe that the life I have still to live will witness the growth of greater influences for good than these twin achievements.

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The abdication of Edward VIII marked the close of another period in the lives of most of us. But in history 'Finis' can never be set at the foot of the page: the end of one chapter connotes the opening of a new. So I feel the case to be with this rambling history of mine. Life still goes on and fresh

history is made. But the start of a new reign seems to constitute a natural break between the world I knew and the world that stands before. And so, with the trumpets proclaiming from Westminster the Coronation of George VI and his Queen still in my ears, I start a fresh note-book.

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